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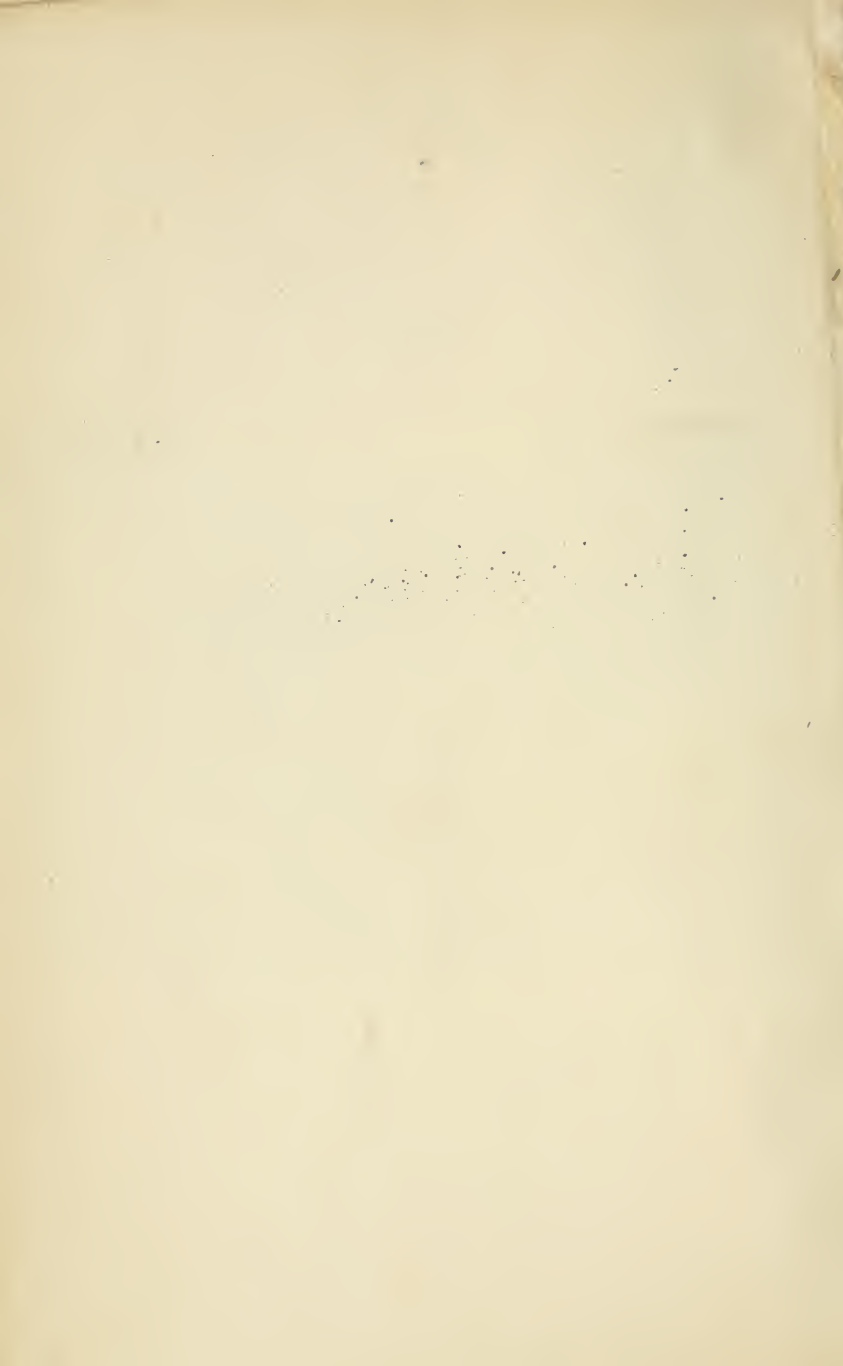
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A BIT OF TUSCAN LIFE IN THE  
SEVENTEENTH CENTURY.



## A BIT OF TUSCAN LIFE IN THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY.

It was the year 1633. Ferdinand II., the fifth grand duke of the Medicean line, was reigning in Tuscany, which was the scene of the facts to be related; Charles I. was in the midst of his troubles in England; Louis XIII. was consolidating monarchical and despotic power in France; and Urban VIII., the *Barberini* pope, who did at Rome worse vandalisms than the *barbari* ever did, was sitting in St. Peter's seat. Gustavus Adolphus had just fallen at the Battle of Lützen, to the great delight of all the princes and princelings in Italy; Wallenstein is very shortly about to come to a worse end, in the following year; and Galileo is being judged and condemned by the Jesuits at Rome, and is

declaring, despite their condemnation, that “the world went round for all that!”

Tuscany was in a very deplorable condition in those days. Cosmo II., the father of Ferdinand II., had not been altogether a bad prince, as far as the material prosperity of the mass of his subjects was concerned. Nor could Ferdinand, looked at from the same point of view, be accused of much worse than deplorable and mischievous weakness. But circumstances were all against him. The extinction of the elder branch of the family of Gonzaga, dukes of Mantua, in the person of the Duke Vincenzo, in 1626, had led, as usual, to war in Italy, and to the passing of the Alps by the armies of the French king and the emperor, whose rapacity was excited by the hope of appropriating an heritage to which there was no immediate heir. The Grand Duke of Tuscany did his best to observe an evenhanded neutrality between the rival claimants, but it was impossible to prevent Tuscany from suffering greatly from the war. Then the old Florentine commerce, especially that in woollen goods, which had for so long a period made the prosperity of the duchy, was being very rapidly ruined by the progress of English industry; and bad political economy,

ill-advised measures of relief, an immensely numerous and outrageously greedy clergy, a large and very costly grand-ducal family, and increasing habits of idleness, had exhausted the huge masses of wealth which the earlier grand dukes had hoarded, and were rapidly making the little duchy, which had been for its size the richest community in Europe, one of the poorest.

In the midst of all her other misfortunes the plague appeared in Tuscany. It was many years since that dreaded visitor, once no stranger in Florence, had been seen there, and the terror and dismay were immense. The most violent methods—efficacious if it had been possible to carry them out, but which, in the absolute impossibility of doing so, made the confusion worse confounded, and increased the general anarchy of the time—were ordered to be adopted. Lazar-houses were appointed in the city, and every person attacked by the malady, without distinction, was compulsorily removed thither. But the result was so horrible, that it was found impossible to persist in carrying out the plan. To have summarily put to death everybody as soon as the fatal symptoms manifested themselves would have been more merciful and less shockingly appalling. The

insides of those magazines of concentrated pestilence, raving suffering, and inevitable death were something too horrible to be contemplated! It was absolutely necessary to relax, and indeed abandon the rule.

Then the usual moral results, which have ever been observed in all lands and in all times so strangely to accompany pestilence, or any other condition of things causing death to be abnormally imminent and frequent, soon followed. The preacher enforces his lesson by reminding men that in the midst of life they are in death. But no sooner are men placed in circumstances which realize the truth to their imaginations in an unmistakable manner, than the anti-moralist's exhortation, "Eat, drink, and be merry, for to-morrow you die," is found to appeal to them with overpoweringly victorious force. A general relaxation of all the ordinary rules of life, and a universal dissoluteness and recklessness, prevailed in all classes throughout the city.

The grand duke and his family behaved admirably on this occasion, going everywhere among the people, risking their lives unsparingly, and draining the Medicean hoards for the relief of the sufferers. The troubles



arising from this last-mentioned source were most inopportunately augmented by the incredibly selfish avarice of the religious orders. When the general lazar-houses had to be abandoned, many nobles gave up their palaces to be turned into receiving-houses for the suffering poor, and the religious orders were required to allow the vast buildings of their convents to be utilized for the same purpose; and it was deemed all the more reasonable that they should do so, inasmuch as the members of the mendicant orders had to be maintained as poor out of the public resources. But the outcry against this measure raised throughout the ecclesiastical world was tremendous. It was sacrilege! it was robbing the Church!—it was defrauding God! The holy men complained to Rome, and Rome at once decreed the major excommunication against all who had been concerned in this act of *spoliation*! Eventually the pope ordered his legate to admit the sinners to absolution, but on condition of a heavy indemnity (accompanied by a humble request for pardon) being paid to the monastic communities.

It was in the midst of all this miserable state of things that the following events occurred. The story is specially interesting as giving a

glimpse of essentially *bourgeois* life. We have stories enough of crime and lawlessness referring to those times, but they almost invariably deal with a *dramatis personæ* belonging to the upper ten thousand.

In the district of the Lower Val d'Arno, a little to the south of the line of rail which now runs from Florence to Leghorn, and about half-way between San Miniato and Pontedera, there is an obscure little commune called Stibbio. The little stream of the Evola, which, coming from the bleak and barren hills around Volterra, crosses the line of rail, and falls into the Arno near the little station of San Romano, passes by it. The lands that lie in the bottom of the great valley of the Arno are rich, but the uplands around Stibbio are poor and hungry; and though they are now all brought under cultivation, that was far from being the case at the beginning of the seventeenth century. It is a region of rolling hill and dale, much broken up by ravines and miniature precipices; for every little water-course, dry as a bone in summer, when its water would be invaluable, turns itself into a torrent in the winter, and carries away the light and friable soil in enormous quantities — actively busy in the secular task of carrying it out into

the Mediterranean, to add future plains and corn-fields to those which have already, within the period of history, been similarly prepared between Pisa and the coast. The country is still a good deal diversified by coppice, and was much more covered at the time of our story.

There, in the first decade of the seventeenth century, lived on their own ancestral fragment of poor hungry land a couple who had much ado to keep body and soul together for themselves and their one only child—a daughter. The little bit of farm would apparently have been insufficient to enable them to do that much unassisted ; for the man exercised the profession of a notary or scrivener, or something of that sort. Perhaps he found some employment in writing love-letters for the lads, or in keeping the accounts of the neighbouring *fattori* ; for surely there could have been but little to do in a notarial capacity at Stibbio.

Enough was, however, picked up somehow to enable the poor writer and his wife and daughter to live ; and their poverty was not so great as to prevent Giulia from growing into the prettiest girl for many a mile round. The young beauty was just fifteen when her mother died, about the same time that the Grand Duke

Cosmo II. died—that is to say, in the spring of 1621. And it was then that her father determined to leave his native place and his starved ancestral farm to try his fortune in the metropolis. It may have been that the change of government offered some prospect to him. It may have been that the remarkable beauty of his peerless Giulia, then just budding into the early womanhood of the precocious South, prompted him to bethink himself that it was a thousand pities that such a treasure should be thrown away upon the not unappreciative but still unworthy boors of her native hills. And this latter motive would be very much in accord with the habits of thought that would have been likely to prevail then and there in such a case. The poor scrivener accordingly, in the spring of 1621, buried his wife, and journeyed with his lovely Giulia painfully to Florence, sleeping the first night at Empoli.

It will be observed that the name of the poor Stibbio scrivener has not been mentioned. The fact is, that we find him to have been known at Florence only by the name of Stibbio—Francesco Stibbio. If he were so called among his own hills, it would have been an indication that the family, however poor, was a remnant of an

old territorial aristocracy. If he were merely nicknamed Stibbio when he came to Florence—a very common Italian practice—it would indicate that Francesco from Stibbio was as good a name as any other for a man who had little claim to family distinction of any kind. It matters little how the case may have been. It is certain that the scrivener was only known at Florence as Francesco Stibbio, and his daughter as Giulia Stibbio.

Francesco Stibbio fell upon his feet in Florence. He found employment at once in the chancery of the Papal legate. What recommendation or influence procured him such preferment there remains nothing to show. But similar positions are not and were not given, save to such as are sealed as Rome's own in some manner very recognizable by Rome's own. And it is probable that Francesco Stibbio came to Florence with warm recommendations from the ecclesiastical authorities of his own district.

His employment was a very humble one, and no doubt the salary attached to it was humbler still. One can picture to one's self the pinched writer sitting in a grimy little office, at an ink-stained desk covered with the sand used for the purpose of blotting-paper, with black calico

sleeves on his arms to protect his threadbare coat, surrounded by forms printed on coarse grey paper, and dirty greasy stamps engraved with the apostolical crosskeys, solacing himself in winter with a *scaldino*, or small earthenware pot filled with hot ashes, and held between his knees.

But though the salary drawn from the apostolical treasury was no doubt a very modest one, and though the appearance and bearing of the legate's poor clerk were more than modest, Francesco found, and Giulia found at the end of the year, that the place was very far from a bad one. There was no human pie of any sort in those days into which Rome did not put its finger, and every smallest touch of that holy finger had to be well paid for. Fees abounded in the legate's office, and the clerk had his share, which—inasmuch as all applicants had to speak first to him, and very soon found out that they had to call again oftener or less often in proportion to their liberality—was likely to be not a small one.

In short, at the end of ten years of sitting in the little grimy office, the poor clerk found that he had scraped together a very tidy bit of money for his Giulia.



Whether, during these years, the beautiful Giulia had grown “as in stature, so in favour with God and man,” as the old college prayer has it, or whether she had grown in favour with the latter only, certain it is that she had grown in stature and in beauty. She was a superb blonde, with a wealth of naturally curling locks of the true Titian-loved auburn tint, large wide-opened blue eyes, rich lips, and a figure that might have been a model for a Judith. And at the end of the ten years it will be observed she was in her twenty-fifth year, and she was still Giulia Stibbio. Whether it were that, as times went then, it was not altogether good for a very beautiful girl, with sun-tinted auburn hair and rich lips, to be left absolute mistress of herself and of the house, while her father and sole protector was away all day stamping dirty documents with greasy dies and gathering in fees—or whether it were that the lovely Giulia would not “to a *party* give up what was meant for mankind,” so it was, that at five-and-twenty the clerk’s daughter was still unmarried. And in Italy that begins at five-and-twenty to be a very serious consideration.

It was then that Francesco bethought him

of a nephew he had left behind him at Stibbio. Whether he began to feel that he wanted some one near him on whose arm he could lean, or whether it struck him for the first time that Giulia needed some more efficient protector than himself; or whether he wished that the sequins he had put together should be inherited by one of his own name, and should go to the aggrandisement of the family acres and the family name in his native place—a very Italian wish; so it was, that he determined on calling unto him his nephew Pietro, at that time a young man of about the same age as his cousin Giulia.

What this young man's employment had been at his native Stibbio, or whether he had had any, or, as is more likely, had led a sauntering, half-starved, poaching life, eating such food as could be got off the bit of poor land, nothing remains to tell. Nor is it exactly clear what his uncle had intended to make of him, further than to make him his heir at Florence; nor is it plain whether the latter intention involved a scheme of making him his son-in-law. But it is certain that, if such were the old scrivener's intention, his nephew showed himself very dutifully inclined to comply with his wishes upon that point, for he lost no time in falling

head over ears in love with his beautiful cousin. Nor did Giulia appear by any means insensible to his attentions. He was not without his share of the family good looks, stood six feet odd inches in his stockings, and was altogether much the sort of youngster that such auburn-haired, rich-lipped lasses as the Signorina Giulia are wont to approve of.

Nevertheless, it did not seem as if all was likely to progress quite smoothly towards the happy union of the cousins. It was a bad time in Florence. The pestilence had just then made its appearance there, coming across the Apennine forests from Bologna, despite every effort to keep it out. And the strange kind of lawless confusion which resulted from this in Florence, as has been said, may have in some degree contributed to lead the young provincial, who found himself in the streets of the capital with more money in his pocket than he had ever had before, into evil courses. It is certain that the life led by his nephew Pietro during that sad time was by no means such as the old scrivener could have wished it.

Yet it is probable that this was not the obstacle that stood in his way with his cousin. The inhabitants of Florence met the pestilence

and the terror it occasioned in two ways mainly. The timid, the pious, and the meek-spirited secluded themselves as much as possible, haunted the churches, and redoubled their practices of devotional observance and asceticism. The bold, the reckless, and especially the young, defied and dared the monster, met in festive gathering more frequently than in ordinary times, and pushed their conviviality to excesses unusual in the commonly sober and thrifty city. Pietro Stibbio belonged very unmistakably to the latter of these categories. As far as the chances of escaping the plague went, the jovial roysterers were perhaps better off, or, at all events, no worse off, than the terrified devotees who trusted to the saints to help them. And as for finding favour in Giulia's eyes, all the glimpses of her character which the old record permits us to catch would lead us to conclude that she liked her cousin none the worse for his devil-may-care mood.

And yet his wooing did not proceed prosperously. Giulia would flirt with him to any extent, and evidently liked the occupation, and one would have said liked him well. But . . . there was something in the way. She would not come to the point. Nothing definitive

could be got from her. The old scrivener meanwhile stuck to his work, and was making money. The times, which were so bad everywhere else, were good in the office of the apostolical legate. The trade that Rome drives is sure to be brisk in all its branches in times of mortal terror and consequent penitence. Besides, all the complaints about the occupation of the monasteries and the consequent thunders of Rome, the submission and excuses following thereupon, and the subsequent admission of the offenders to pardon, all brought grist to the clerk's mill—all more or less caused a multiplication of documents on the coarse grey paper which needed the imposition of the greasy impress of St. Peter's keys. Old Francesco was early and late at his grimy office, like an old spider in the centre of his net, and the flies or fees fell in fast. Doubtless he imagined that all was going as he would have had it between his daughter and his nephew, though he did not fail to hear various reports that made him somewhat uneasy respecting the life that the latter was leading.

Matters, however, had not continued long in this position before Pietro Stibbio began to think that he had discovered the obstacle that

made the course of his love (the wonted epithet might as well, perhaps, be left out) run less smoothly than it might otherwise have done. Jovial gatherings were liable to sudden interruptions in those days; and it had twice occurred that Pietro, returning to his uncle's house at an earlier hour than his cousin had had reason to expect him, had found a visitor there—a young man of his own age—very pleasantly engaged in amusing the brilliant Giulia with *tête-à-tête* chat, while her father was busy earning money and her cousin spending it.

It must be understood that such a *tête-à-tête* could not have been considered an altogether proper and permissible thing according to the conventional proprieties of the place and time. But all such rules were much relaxed during that time of general distress. And, besides that, it is to be feared that Giulia Stibbio was not altogether a model “girl of the period.”

The visitor, however, who was thus surprised by Pietro in his uncle's house was not entirely unknown to him, and was one who might be supposed to have some sort of excuse for a certain degree of intimacy with Giulia. He was one Carlo Marti, the son of a rich *fattore*



in the neighbourhood of Stibbio. It was probable enough, therefore, that he might be an old acquaintance of Francesco Stibbio and of his family. Pietro knew him by sight, though he was but very slightly acquainted with him. As a pretendant to Giulia's hand, he could hardly be considered such an one as the old clerk would have approved; for though he was the son of a *fattore* well known to be rich, he was the fourth of a large family of brothers, and as such could expect but little from his father.

Of course the two young men snarled and growled at each other; and of course the fair Giulia, when her more authorized lover would have taken her to task for her intimacy with the *fattore's* son, fired up, and tossed her auburn locks, and did not know what right he had, etc., etc.—and was not going to submit to it, etc., etc.; and of course she took care, before her cousin left her, to drop a word or two, and give him a glance or two, which sufficed to keep alive in him the hope that, after all, she cared more for him than for anybody else in the world.

What the beautiful Giulia really wanted, what was at the bottom of her heart, it is diffi-

cult to say. Do we find it easy to say, in similar cases, when the heart to be pronounced on, or at least the pretty form that covers it, is under the immediate observation of our eyes? And if that is generally too difficult a task, how shall we hope to decipher the inscrutable across the mists of more than two hundred years? Whether Giulia desired prudently to have two strings to her bow, or whether she were imprudently minded to have two beaux to her string, there is nothing to show. Certain it is that she continued to behave in the distressing manner in which too provokingly bewitching members of her sex will still occasionally conduct themselves, when they still could be happy with either "were t'other dear charmer away."

But at last, one day, when his uncle had been lecturing Pietro upon his course of life, expressing his discontent with him generally, and throwing in his teeth the fact that he had not adopted, and apparently would not adopt, any line of life by which he might earn his salt, it would seem that Giulia, alone with him afterwards, had let some word fall of a similar tendency. The taunt brought a very ugly and dangerous-looking scowl to her cousin's brow;

and the next morning he told her that he was not going to be made a fool of by her any longer—that he had made up his mind to seek service on one side or other (he little cared which) of the war in Lombardy; and he hoped she might find Carlo Marti a suitor to her liking.

Giulia turned first very red, and in the next instant very pale; and perhaps, if he had given her time to speak, the upshot of this narrative might have been a different one. But he turned on his heel and left her as he spoke the above words. Still Giulia did not believe, when she came to reflect, that he would really do what he said. She supposed that he would speak to her father, and that he would assuredly find some means or other to prevent such a catastrophe.

But Pietro never went near his uncle, or communicated his purpose to him in any way. He did exactly as he said he would do, and accordingly Pietro Stibbio was heard of no more in Florence for the next two years.

And then—in the year 1633, that is to say—the old scrivener died.

And here the old seventeenth-century chronicler pauses in his narrative to inveigh against

the dreadful tendencies of the trade of soldiering. It is, he declares, the school of all wickedness—the devil's own academy! There is no sort of atrocity which may not be expected at the hands of men hired to cut each other's throats in quarrels none of their own or their country's. And it must be confessed that all the records of the time in question go to show that, as regarded the mercenary bands which were then ravaging the north of Italy, the statement was not an undeserved or exaggerated one.

It would seem however that, being such as they were, Pietro Stibbio very soon showed himself to be the sort of man who was wanted among them; for he rapidly rose to the rank of standard-bearer, and during the rest of his story is always styled accordingly "*L'alfiere*."

On hearing of his uncle's death the *Alfiere* Pietro returned to Florence, bringing with him a comrade named Giovanni Borna. The object of his return was to see whether, despite the past, he might not yet be the heir to some part of his uncle's savings, and to look after that portion of the heritage at Stibbio which it would seem was certainly to come to him.

Arrived in Florence, he lost no time in swaggering, in company with his friend Borna, into

the quiet little house which his uncle and Giulia had inhabited, and which the latter, accompanied only by an old female servant, now tenanted alone. This Borna was a man of higher birth and more culture than his friend the *Alfiere*, and had been, like him, led to adopt the profession of a mercenary man-at-arms by the results of a disorderly and reckless life. Though not of the magnificent stature of the *Alfiere*, he was a remarkably handsome man, and despite the guard-room swagger of his manners had in the midst of it sufficient remains of the bearing of a gentleman to make him appear a veritable Mars in person to such a girl as Giulia Stibbio. Her cousin, it would seem, had boasted much of the beauty of the young relative to whom he would introduce him when they should reach Florence, and Borna came to the little house prepared with all his most practised wiles and conquering airs for the meeting.

He came—he saw—he conquered, and apparently was himself as entirely conquered in his turn. In less heroic terms, it appears that Giulia and the stranger were smitten with mutual admiration. It was on both sides one of those knock-down passions which were all

the more violent in proportion to the smallness of the reasonable or spiritual element in them, and to which Southern natures, and especially such natures as those of the handsome man-at-arms and the Signorina Giulia, are especially liable.

Both the lady and gentleman, however, were sensible of the expediency of concealing the nature of their sentiments from the Alfieri. Borna knew that his friend had by no means relinquished his pretensions to his cousin's hand; and whatever Giulia's feelings may have been, there was something about the Alfieri which prompted her not to outrage him too severely immediately on his return.

Pietro's manner to his cousin, notwithstanding this consideration on her part, could not be said to be cordial. While appearing to assert, in seeming at least, a sort of claim to her, it was aggressive and half-sneering in tone. Giulia, on the other hand, seemed to have become afraid of him. There was an absence of the provocative manner which had so often angered him, at the same time that it had, despite himself, captivated him; but any calm bystander would have seen a much greater possibility of love concealing itself under the



former manner, than of detecting it under the latter. He learned from her, in the course of their interview, that his old rival Carlo Marti had become, from being a very bad match in a prudential point of view, a very good one; for his three elder brothers had perished of the pestilence, and he was now his rich father's heir. How matters stood between Giulia and him he of course did not learn, and knew very well that there was no use in attempting to learn. He did, however, discover that Marti was not now in Florence, but at his father's house in the neighbourhood of Stibbio; and before the Alfieri and Borna left Giulia, she understood from them that they purposed leaving Florence together for Stibbio the next morning.

"I must go—I have promised. May I come and see you when I come back? We shall only be gone a couple of days," said Borna, in a whisper, as he followed the Alfieri from the room; receiving only a glance in return, which he had no difficulty in interpreting as conveying all the answer he desired.

The next day the two friends did journey to Stibbio. And a very short time sufficed to convince the Alfieri that not only had his uncle left him nothing, but that nothing, or

next to nothing, was to be hoped for from his inheritance there.

What had been the precise motive with Borna for accompanying his friend on his journey—whether he had any claims on him, gambling claims or suchlike, whether he had merely been led by the hope of sharing the good-luck of a comrade coming in to a fortune, or whether he had been allured merely by the Alfieri's talk of his cousin's beauty—is not clear. It is tolerably certain that he hoped to get something by his journey, in some way; and it is quite certain that, as far as money went, he found himself, when the true state of things became apparent at Stibbio, altogether disappointed.

Under these circumstances he appears not to have had the smallest hesitation in acceding to a proposal which his comrade and brother-in-arms then and there made to him. This was nothing less than that they should indemnify themselves for all the slights of fortune by robbing a house, in which the Alfieri said that he had the means of knowing there was a large sum of money. The house in question was a solitary farmhouse a few miles distant from Stibbio, the home of the rich *fattore*, the father of Carlo Marti.



No doubt the Alfiere was tempted to conceive and execute this scheme by a double motive. By robbing the *fattore* Marti, he would be at the same time restoring his own broken fortunes and reducing his rival to a condition of poverty, which would effectually debar him from any further pretensions to the hand of his beautiful and now well-provided cousin.

The notable scheme seems to have been put in execution as soon as conceived. The old chronicler eagerly calls upon his readers to remark that these men were soldiers. That seems to be the whole "moral" of his narrative. "*Et fuerunt qui hæc fecerunt, milites,*" he says, suddenly breaking off into Latin and big letters, in his anxiety to impress the fact upon his reader. And doubtless we may see in his feeling upon the subject an indication of what the mercenary bands were who made war their trade in those days—what Italy had to suffer from them, and what the general feeling of the population towards those warriors was.

Certainly, it seems to have needed singularly little to induce a couple of officers of the army to turn into burglars. Signor Borna was as ready to assist his comrade in the proposed little affair as if he had asked him to join in the simplest party of pleasure.

At nightfall that same evening the two reckless scoundrels went to the solitary farm, and effected an entrance into the house without much difficulty. In it, at the time, were the *fattore* and his old wife, their son Carlo, a daughter, and another son much younger—a child of some ten or twelve years old. The Alfieri's intention was simply to compel the old man to give up the money which he was known to have in the house. But he had reckoned without allowing for the memory of country-folks, whose minds are subjected to few new impressions or objects to mingle with and obliterate the old ones. The Alfieri, knowing himself a changed man from what he had been when old Marti might have seen him in his boyhood, had no idea that the *fattore* would recognise him. But no sooner had he waked the old man from his sleep, than he at once addressed him by his name, demanding what he wanted, and protesting that he had never done anything to deserve Pietro Stibbio's enmity.

The words were fatal to him and his!

The necessity of butchering the whole family in order to secure the concealment of their crime was recognised, and at once accepted and acted on, by the two desperadoes; and they

accordingly put to death the father, mother, son, and daughter—leaving the child, of whose existence they were unaware, and whom they had not discovered, unharmed. They then collected all the bodies into the middle of the kitchen, and went out into the yard to bring in a quantity of straw, in order to burn the victims and the house together. While they were absent from the house for this purpose, the child crept from his bed and from the house, and hid himself in a field of standing corn close to the homestead, having witnessed the murder of all his family, and having heard his father address the murderer by his name.

As soon as the blaze burst forth, which was, as they imagined, to obliterate all traces of the deed that had been done, they sprang on their horses, and galloped towards Florence, reaching it, after a desperately hard ride, early the next morning.

It was the morning of the 24th of June, which is, and for eight hundred years has been, a great day in Florence: for the 24th of June is St. John's day, and St. John is the patron saint of the City of Flowers. There were always grand doings in Florence on that day, and the faint and quickly vanishing shadow

of them may still be seen every year on the once celebrated anniversary. It was very hard for a Florentine of those days to quit Florence on the morning of the 24th of June. Such festivals and the gala-doings which celebrated them were very dear to the Italian heart at that period, and the temptation to stay and take part in them was very strong.

Nevertheless, the Alfieri was for riding on for Bologna, and putting the grand-ducal frontier between them and the scene of their last night's deed. But, besides the attraction of the festival, his companion Borna had another and a still stronger motive for desiring to tarry awhile in the fair City of Flowers. He had promised to see Giulia on his return from Stibbio. The look with which she had accepted the tryst was still before his eyes and in his heart, and he was not minded to lose the meeting. Besides, where was the danger? They had made all safe enough at the farm. In all probability it would be supposed that what had happened was the result of an accidental conflagration. And even if any suspicion should arise, to the effect that the utter destruction of the whole family could hardly be thus satisfactorily accounted for, there was nothing what-

ever to connect them with the affair. In short, Borna overruled his friend : and it was determined that they should remain that day and night in Florence, and ride for Bologna the next morning.

Possibly the Alfieri did not care to leave his friend Borna to spend the day and the evening with Giulia alone. Possibly, also, what he saw during the day and the evening they all three spent together did not tend to make him feel kindly towards his companion-in-arms.

And when the next morning, at the hour fixed between them for getting to horse, Borna was not to be found, nor any tidings of him to be had, it is probable that the Alfieri was by no means better disposed towards him. The Alfieri, however, determined to start on his ride at once, without waiting for him. He could not make himself quite easy about that ugly night's work. He was eager to get further away from it, and to reach the safety of his camp and the company of his comrades-in-arms.

He rode out of Florence unquestioned ; rode all that day, gave his horse a few hours of rest at night at a lonely hostelry on the top of the Apennines, and reached Bologna safely on the afternoon of the 26th of June.

Meantime, as may be imagined, the little boy Marti, who alone had escaped the fate that had befallen his family, as soon as ever the sound of their horses' feet dying away in the distance assured him that the murderers were gone, made the best of his way to the nearest house, and there told his horrible tale. But tales, however breathlessly interesting, are not told and are not listened to quickly in Tuscany. Nothing, however urgent, is done quickly. Telling the story took some time; the inevitable talking of it over took much more. The neighbouring authorities, when at last applied to, spent several more hours in deciding what was to be done. And when, at last, the intelligence that a whole family had been murdered and a house burned down by Pietro Stibbio, late of the village of that name, and by another man unknown, reached Florence, the murderer was already on his road to Bologna.

There was, however, not much difficulty in discovering that he had left Florence by the great north road, which crosses the Apennines in that direction. He was, of course, well known in Florence—had been seen by many at the festival, in company with his beautiful cousin and a stranger,—and a little inquiry traced him to



the posthouse whence he had started on his ride. Fortunately, the Stibbio authorities had had the sense to send the boy Nanni Marti (Giovanni was his name—Nanni for short) to Florence; and a couple of *sbirri*, as those who would now be called *gendarmes* were named in those days, were dispatched towards the Papal frontier on the Bologna road, taking the boy with them, and also a letter from the apostolical legate at Florence to the Papal authorities at Bologna, directing them to deliver up the criminal to the Tuscan officers, if he should be found.

The whole of the sixty miles of the old ante-railway road from Florence to Bologna passes through a very thinly inhabited district. Not one town—hardly a village or two—lies on the track. The pursuers came upon the scent of the fugitive at the lone house where he had baited his horse on the crest of the Apennines, and the people there had no doubt that the horseman who had seemed so anxious to get on had been bound for Bologna; and the *sbirri* rode on thither accordingly.

But Bologna is a large city, and the anarchic complexion of the times, and the very imperfect police arrangements of those days, when most governments strove to supply the want of regu-

larity of action by violence, made it a difficult matter to ascertain whether the Alfieri had again left the city, or to find him if he still remained in it. But chance, and a rather acute bit of character-reading on the part of one of the *sbirri*, favoured the object in view. Pietro Stibbio, in the days when he was a ne'er-do-well idler in the streets of Florence, before he had gone to be a soldier, had been a notorious haunter of taverns, and had acquired the character of being specially fond, as well as a good judge, of a glass of wine. Now there was a certain tavern in Bologna, situated close to the bases of those two strangely leaning brick towers, which are the first objects that strike a stranger on entering the city, which was especially noted for its good wine. It was largely frequented by all classes, and the confidential servant of the cardinal legate was often seen there selecting a flask for his master's own use.

"If Pietro Stibbio is at all like the lad he used to be," said one of the officers, who had known something of him at Florence, "he will not pass through Bologna without tasting the wine at 'The Holy Keys,' if the devil was at his heels. Suppose we have a look for him



there. It can but cost a cup of wine for ourselves."

They went to the place in question, taking the boy Marti with them, as well as an officer of the papal police. And hardly had they begun to push their way among the crowd of guests before the child's quick eye spied, sitting with a flask before him, at a table by himself, the man on whose face he had gazed with such unspeakable horror on that terrible night when he had witnessed the slaughter of father, mother, brother, and sister. It was not likely that he should ever more forget those features !

The room in which the *Alfiere* was drinking was a very long apartment, narrow in proportion to its great length, roofed by a low arched ceiling, and lighted only by a window in the end facing the street, from which the whole length of the room ran back. It was thus very dark in the part of it farthest removed from the street, and but for the child's quick eye it might have been possible for the murderer to escape observation. But once seen, herculean as was the strength of the towering *Alfiere's* form, there was little or no hope of escape. The long room was thickly crowded ; there was no exit from it save by the door opening in the street,

and there were no such aids as revolvers for desperate men in those days. The Alfieri was caught like a rat in a trap; and, to make a long story short—or at least somewhat shorter—before two more hours were over his head he was on his way back to Florence, heavily ironed, and escorted by the two Florentine *sbirri* and two gentlemen of the same profession in the papal service.

It must have been an unpleasant journey for the swaggering, dashing, desperate man-at-arms, that ride over the bleak Apennine back to Florence. He must have known right well what he was going to. Justice was not particularly scrupulous as to completeness of proof in those days, even if the proof of the Alfieri's crime had been less complete than it was. The child's testimony was positive and unhesitating, and it was easy enough to believe that he might remember unerringly a face that he had gazed on under such circumstances. He declared that he should not have the slightest difficulty in pointing out the other man who had assisted in the murders, if he should see him.

Arrived at Florence, the prisoner was at once lodged in the Bargello, as the common prison was called.

The building used during the whole of the period of the Tuscan grand-dukes for that purpose was built originally for the residence of the *podestà*, or chief magistrate of the commonwealth. It is one of the oldest buildings remaining in the city, and the stranger who now visits it as a museum of mediæval art, sees it restored with admirable skill to its original architectural condition, and admires in it one of the finest specimens extant of the domestic architecture of the twelfth century. During the Medicean principality, the noble halls were divided by huge timbers into many tiers of cells resembling the cages of wild beasts. But these were for ordinary malefactors. For such criminals as the *Alfiere*, who were to come forth from those colossal walls no more save to go to the place of execution, there were yet more terrible dungeons in the basement of the ancient building. It is an easy thing to construct a prison capable of depriving the most desperate and the cleverest prison-breaker of all hope, if only the dictates of humanity may be disregarded—and humanity is quite a modern discovery. And the *Alfiere* was lodged in an underground cage, formed in the midst of a mass of masonry, from which a human being

had as much chance of escaping as a toad has from one of those mysterious hollows in the living rock in which such prisoners have occasionally been found.

The first object with the Florentine magistrate was to discover the accomplice who had aided the Alfieri in the commission of his crime, and the prisoner was given to understand that none of the resources of the torture-chamber would be spared to make him confess both his own crime and the name of his accomplice. But the Alfieri spared the officers and himself any such trouble. Well convinced that his case was hopeless, he made no difficulty in relating the whole history of the murder; and he seemed to find a special satisfaction in letting it be known that the man who assisted him, and took a full share in the commission of the crime, was Giovanni Borna, a Lombard, who had accompanied him to Florence from the army. But where this man was he could not say. He told truly how and when and where they had parted, and how Borna had failed to come to the place whence they were to have started together for Bologna, in a manner that persuaded the magistrates that he was in truth telling all he knew.

“But,” said he, “if you want to find him (and, you may believe me, I am to the full as wishful that you should find him as you can be), go and look in the house inhabited by my cousin, Giulia Stibbio, the daughter of old Francesco Stibbio, the miserly clerk of the Pope’s legate. If I am not mistaken you will find him there. And, at all events, you may be very sure the Signorina Giulia can tell you where he is; and if she won’t tell you for asking, a taste of what you were promising me just now would soon make her speak, haughty as she is! And, look ye, Messer Bargello!” he added, calling after the officer, as the latter was leaving him, “I should take it kindly of you if you would let the Signorina Giulia know that I send my compliments to her, and that it was I who told you where to look for my friend Bornà! *Corpo di Dio!* if they think that I am to hang, and leave them to make love and spend the money together, they are mistaken!”

Again we may venture to abridge the old chronicler’s record, with advantage to the reader, and hasten forward to the conclusion.

Giulia protested, in a manner that would have convinced anybody save an Italian, that she knew nothing of Bornà, and had never seen

him since he had left her in company with her cousin on the evening of the 24th of June. And when she was told that it was on the information of the Alfieri himself that the officers had come thither to search for his friend, the rage, the scorn, the tempest of bitter contempt and deadly hate exhibited by the furious beauty, was a thing to see and hear—that those who saw and heard it did not forget for a while! Still, she swore by all that is most sacred, and invoked the Virgin and all the saints to witness to her truth, that she had never seen Borna since that night. Why should she see him? She knew nothing about him. She had only seen him as her cousin's comrade. And as for what her cousin had said, it was a mean, malignant, wicked calumny, invented to revenge the scorn and contempt she had always felt for him, and always should feel for such a one as he!

Then the officer began to speak of the cruelly painful duty which would fall on him, of subjecting those magnificently beautiful limbs to the torture of the rack, if she should persist in refusing to furnish justice with the information it needed. And Giulia turned deadly pale, shook all over, and fell silent. Then the officer



turned to an attendant, and produced, from a queer-looking case the man carried, an ingenious but singularly disagreeable-looking little instrument, very cleverly designed, for forcing the finger-nails from the finger by slow and uniform pressure. He proceeded to explain the mode of its action to the shrinking and shivering girl; and then, holding the horrible little machine in one hand, he suddenly grasped Giulia's wrist with the other—not with any real intention of proceeding then and there to the application of his instrument, but in the hope that his action might have the effect which in fact it produced.

No sooner did she feel the touch of the man's fingers on her wrist than, uttering a short half-suppressed scream, she pointed silently to a mat, lying on the landing-place of the stairs, outside of the door of the room on the first-floor in which they were. The officer's follower removed the mat; and there appeared beneath it a round stone with a ring in it, which gave access to a small chamber formed beneath the stairs for the purpose of holding, and more or less concealing, a store of corn in time of scarcity. Such receptacles were very common in Florentine houses, and may still be frequently



seen in old buildings. The intention of them was doubtless that which has been stated, but they were also very well adapted for concealing other things.

The officers raised the round stone . . . and there, in the small chamber below it, was the man they wanted.

\* \* \* \* \*

The sentence on the prisoners was that they should be conveyed on open tumbrils—one for each of them—from the prison in the centre of the city to the open space outside the Porta Croce; that during all the time occupied by that journey their bodies, stripped to the waist, should be torn by red-hot pincers; that they should be then hung, drawn, and quartered, and finally burned, and the ashes of them be scattered to the winds.

And this sentence was carried into execution, in every respect save the tearing of the living flesh with red-hot pincers. By special clemency of the Grand-Duke, this part of the punishment was inflicted in appearance only. There were small forges on the carts, in which the pincers were made red-hot by the attendant executioners, who made as if they were rending the flesh with them; and vessels of liquid stood by to dip the

hot irons in, so that a hissing and a smoke should be made, as if the exact wording of the sentence were being carried out. On each cart, also, there was a Capuchin friar, to supply to the sufferer such "spiritual consolation" as he was supposed to be capable of receiving while his body was being torn by red-hot irons.

A great crowd thronged the streets through which the carts had to pass to the place of execution, but it was less than it would have been at another time; for many persons remained within their houses, deterred from going out to view the sight by the very reasonable fear of joining a crowd in those days of pestilence.

Giulia Stibbio, however, was not prevented by the fear of the plague from feasting her eyes on the sufferings and degradation of the cousin she so intensely hated. Among the knot of persons gathered to see the carts as they passed on the steps of the prison then called the *Stinchi*, which stood where the *Pagliano Theatre* now stands, was Giulia! But in order to witness the punishment of the man she hated she was compelled to witness the agony of him who had been her lover. And doubtless Giulia would have fain avoided this; but if the pleasure could not be had without the pain, then

she would take them both—for she *could* not forego the former.

But it was the last time that Giulia Stibbio was ever seen in the streets of Florence ; for she took the vows in a convent of Teresian nuns—an order of the severest kind—where she died many years afterwards.

And the old chronicler from whose manuscript this narrative has been taken winds up his story by repeating once again, in large letters—

“ *Et qui hæc fecerunt fuerunt milites !* ”

THE HEIRESS OF GALERA.



## THE HEIRESS OF GALERA.

“LET us take a fine day and a carriage,” said one of us, as we were strolling one lovely afternoon on the high ground in the immediate neighbourhood of Monte Mario at Rome, “and go to see Galera.”

“With all my heart,” said the person addressed; “and if I am not mistaken we shall have a fine day to-morrow. Let us go and see Galera, by all means. But who is she? and where does she live?”

“She is the very type of the abomination of desolation. She dwells in the profoundest seclusion on a forest-covered knoll hard by the solitary shore of the melancholy Lago di Bracciano. All her children have deserted her. The air she breathes is pestiferous: disease and death are round about her. She is, on the whole,

perhaps the most melancholy object to look on that I have anywhere met with in the course of my pilgrimages on the face of this earth," replied the first speaker.

"Your account can hardly be said to be an inviting one," returned his companion. "Why should we go to see Galera? Can we be of any service to the unhappy old creature?"

"We can render her no service whatever: no one can do so. Nevertheless, we will go and see her, for the sight of her is as curious as it is melancholy. In a word, Galera is a small city which has been deserted on account of the malaria. It has not only dwindled and become wretched like many another locality in the fever-stricken Campagna and in the Maremma, where decimated remnants of population continue to live on in what, to the more fortunate, seems a living death; at Galera the fiend has definitively conquered. There he has put forth his utmost strength, and man has either left his bones there or has fled before his power. The place is one the like of which you have never seen or imagined. It is worth a visit, I assure you."

It was on an afternoon in January that the foregoing conversation took place—one of those



exquisitely delicious Roman winter evenings with a soft and gentle freshness in the air, but without the sensation of a nip in it : a climate the charm of which no other on the earth that I know can match. And at that season a visit even to Galera might be made without danger, provided that you went fortified by a good and substantial meal against the demon lurking there all the year round, that you were not seduced into sitting about in the picturesque environs, and that you took due care to start on your return before sunset. Even at that time it would very probably be fatal to sleep there. But the distance from Rome is not more than fifteen miles, and we could therefore count safely upon being ere nightfall within the shelter of the walls of the Eternal City.

But it appeared not to be the simplest thing in the world to hire a carriage and desire the driver to drive you to Galera. Some had never heard of such a place : others had heard of it as a place to which no human creature would willingly go, but had not the least idea as to its whereabouts. We must go to La Storta, a name very familiar in the ears of travellers in the old ante-railway days, for it is the first post-house on the road to Florence, and nine miles from

Rome. There or thereabouts we must quit the highroad and turn to the left—toward the coast that is, and in the direction of the Lake of Bracciano. Beyond this the course it behoved us to take was not so clear. At last, after consultation with every casual bystander, and lengthy expressions of opinion on the part of each, the proprietor of a “botte” (such is the Roman slang word for a cab) and of a right good horse—such as may often be found between Roman and never between Florentine shafts—engaged to take us to a spot not much more than a mile from the deserted walls of Galera, and named from that hapless town Santa Maria di Galera.

Of our drive to La Storta in the crisp morning air of the next morning little need be said. As soon as the Tiber has been crossed at the Ponte Molle the road becomes very solitary and cheerless, but not more so than is pretty nearly every road out of Rome, save that the aspect of the post-house at La Storta had a melancholy about it characteristic of its having seen better days, when the stream of travel from the North passed that way. After leaving the great road at La Storta, the appearance of desolation became more marked and the general aspect of the country wilder and more picturesque. Yet the

road we were now following was once a famous Roman highway leading to cities of note—the Via Claudia, which branched off from the Via Flaminia in the near neighbourhood of the modern post-station of La Storta. Some five miles' drive through a country gradually becoming more wooded brought us to Santa Maria di Galera, a solitary farm-house and *osteria*, with those huge outbuildings so common around the farm-houses in the Roman Campagna, which always look a world too wide for any uses the present occupier can have for them—one phase of the universal appearance of decadence which every department of life and every sight that meets the eye suggests to the most casual observer of Roman things and Roman surroundings. There is in the huge farm-yard a long inscription composed in choice lapidary Latin style, chiseled in uncial letters in the marble, and adorned with pretentious architectural ornamentation, which tells how some pope of two or three centuries ago caused the water, that still flows in resplendent purity into a dilapidated cattle-trough, to be conducted hither in underground pipes. The gaunt and meagre but large framed and monstrous-horned cattle, seconded by the careless unthrift of Roman laziness, had

made a loathsome slough of all the ground in front of this ostentatiously recorded conduit, and the contrast between the past and present tenses of the scene contained, for those who could read it, a sufficiently suggestive page of history and a whole disquisition on political economy.

We were on rather high ground, and could see farther than the object of our pilgrimage in various directions, but we could not see Galera. The face of the country is extremely *accidenté*, and much diversified with small coppices; so that it was intelligible enough that we might not discover it. We knew, however, the direction in which it was situated, and imagined that we could not fail to find it without difficulty. But such, we were assured by the people of the solitary *osteria*, would not be the case, and we were counselled to accept the services of a guide. Though strongly suspecting that the difficulties of the undertaking were exaggerated for the sake of the franc or two which might be the guide's fee, yet, as the nature of the country seemed a puzzling one, and especially as our time was limited, we consented to place ourselves under the direction of a nondescript sort of individual, answering to what would in Ireland be called "the odd boy." He was an exceedingly

shaggy specimen of humanity, appearing to our Northern eyes to be about sixteen or seventeen, but, as we subsequently learned, more than nineteen years of age. He wore a ragged felt hat of that peculiar form which is so curiously common to the Irish and the Roman peasant. (Did the reader who may have travelled in Ireland, or has otherwise had an opportunity of observing the figures of the lower classes of Irish, ever remark the exceedingly singular and striking resemblance in clothing, bearing, gait, and general appearance of the two above-mentioned classes?) The upper part of his person was clad in a white shirt of a texture resembling the sail of a fishing-smack, and the nether portion in huge sheepskin breeches tanned with the wool on. He was portentiously ugly, which is not usual among the Roman peasantry, but his huge coarse grinning mouth, great eyes and broad flat nose, were free from that expression of malignity which so often characterizes the handsome faces of these people. His nose was Socratic, but the condition of his intelligence did not appear to match it, for he seemed to be marvellously stupid. We thought, however, that he must have wit enough to serve the purpose in hand, and committed ourselves to his guidance nothing doubting.

The way by which he led us was one which a Newfoundland dog might have been expected to choose—nearly as straight as a bee-line, but taking us through thickets, up and down places almost precipitous, and through water-courses; whereas, as we suspected at the time, and found to be the case afterwards, there was a very fair path in another direction, which would have taken us to the ancient gateway in the wall of the deserted town, instead of bringing us, as the pathless route taken by Shockhead did, to the outside of the walls on the opposite side of the place.

The ravine into which we plunged almost immediately after leaving Santa Maria would in Switzerland have assumed an aspect as cheerful as it was picturesque. The woodman's axe would have been heard in the forest; the cheerful calls of herdsmen would have resounded from hill to hill; the rushing brook would have been made to do duty in some way for the well-being of man. How different were all the sights and sounds of the scene here! Everything that met the ear or the eye spoke of desolation, decay, and death. All told of retrogression instead of progress. And this is the secret of that ineffable sense of melancholy



which associates itself with the strange and still fascinating beauty of the Roman Campagna in all its phases. Malaria? Yes, the malaria demon was there, and indicated his baleful presence in a hundred forms. But malaria is the product of combined laziness and misgovernment. Transfer that desolate district into the centre of a Swiss canton, and its inhabitants would in a very few years find the means of exorcising the fiend. Here he reigns supreme. His victims die, or drag on lives in which death is chronically at odds with life, but no man raises a hand against him. The animals, which alone represent the element of life in the forlorn scene, are suggestively contrasted with those which people the pastures of happier lands. The sleek, paunchy burgher of a Swiss town is not more unlike a ruffian mediæval baron of the Apennines than the smooth-skinned, well-fed, profitable, peaceful cow on a Swiss hillside is unlike the huge, gaunt, half-wild creatures, with their monstrous horns, the tips some four feet asunder, that roam drearily over these hills and valleys.

But withal there is a strangely fascinating beauty about the region, which increases as Galera is approached. We were leaving the



Lake of Bracciano farther behind us, and following, though not accurately or entirely so, the direction of the valley of the Arrone, the stream which is the outlet of the lake, taking its waters in a south-westerly direction toward the Mediterranean. The steep and deep ravine through which the little river runs is enclosed between precipices of basaltic lava, indicating the volcanic nature of the whole district. The ancient town stands on a bold and nearly isolated promontory almost surrounded by the valley, with its stream at the bottom of it—a situation just such as a lawless noble bandit loved to select for his dwelling in the days when the inaccessibility of a residence was as valuable and as much sought a quality as is its exact reverse in our days. The sides of the ravine in the immediate neighbourhood of the town are thickly and picturesquely covered by a luxuriant growth of coppice of the most varied description, the greater portion of it being evergreen. An artist might find subjects for a dozen sketches, each more enticing than the other, and work many a day in the combinations of rock, water, evergreen foliage, and gray, ruinous, lichen-and-ivy-grown wall.

Under the guidance of Shockhead we made

our way up the ravine, crossing and recrossing the stream, and finding a path as best we might among the wood, till we came round to the southern side of the town. Here we saw the old gray walls emerging out of the sea of verdure high above us, and proceeded to clamber up the side of the ravine. It was a task of some labour, for, January as it was, a blazing sun was shining fiercely, and the south-looking side of the ravine had the temperature of a hot-house. At last we found ourselves at the foot of the town-wall. It was not altogether in a condition that a Vauban or a Turenne would have deemed satisfactory, but it was still sufficient to oppose an apparently insurmountable obstacle to our entrance into the town, or, indeed, to our farther progress in any except a retrograde direction.

But, lo! Galera was not an utterly deserted city, after all! Nched in among the evergreens at the very foot of the wall we discovered a cottage. A cottage? Well, I hardly think that that term will enable any one of those likely to become my readers to picture to himself any semblance of the dwelling I would fain describe to him. It could not be called "detached," or even "semi-detached," for

it was erected against the stout old town-wall, which indeed constituted a part of it. It was not constructed of stone or brick, or timber or mud, or rushes or canes, though all these materials seemed to have contributed something toward the edifice, which was of a more emphatically composite order of architecture than any other I have ever met with. Of all the recognized materials for human building, mortar seemed to be the only one which the architect had entirely neglected. Ornamentation, of a somewhat costly kind too, could not be said to be entirely wanting, for fragments of sculptured stone might be seen here and there in strangely abnormal positions: a huge piece of heraldic blazonry, for instance, deeply cut in the stone, supporting one corner of the foundations, while the carved capital of a column did duty as a seat on one side of what seemed the entrance. Bricks innocent of mortar save such still adhering fragments as they had brought with them from their last place, entered largely into the composition of the structure, and might have done so to any larger extent had it been worth while to bring more of them from the ruined tenements within the town. Tiles, too, made a part of the roof,

in combination with wattles of cane and rushes, though tiles to any extent might have been had for the taking. Ready-made doors must have been abundant in the quarry from which the materials of that dwelling had mainly been taken, but the architect of it had not thought fit to utilize them. What did duty as such was merely a sort of hurdle swinging on a stake, and formed of canes and reeds.

Yet the place was evidently inhabited. Around it, and close under the wall of the town, there was some little attempt at gardening. Some potato-plants, a few heads of lettuce, a few onions, leeks, and cabbages, might be seen. How a Scotch gardener would have envied that bit of wall! Peaches and nectarines, or whatever required the choicest efforts of his art, might have been grown there in that January weather. It was all hot-house. Resting on some mutilated but still handsomely-carved stone brackets, once probably the support of choice specimens of the sculptor's genius, were some very rotten-looking planks, and on these were ranged a row of straw beehives: the bees were abroad in the sunshine, and were filling all the hot air with their humming. And, hot as it was, how pure the air seemed!

how perfectly healthful seemed the gentle southern breeze that blew from the not distant Mediterranean! Who could have dreamed that while it caressingly fanned your cheek it was insidiously poisoning your blood? Who save those that had been victims of its treachery?

We had come upon the hut from the side opposite to that on which the entrance was, and stood gazing upon it with wonder and curiosity. Presently we advanced round the corner of the building, stepping carefully among the sparse vegetables which struggled for room to live in a soil where the fragments of man's ruined handiwork encumbered the space on one hand, and the encroachments of Nature's more active operations on the other. Sitting on the capital of the sculptured column on one side of the hurdle door was the figure of a female, evidently the mistress of the strange domain. Yes, a woman, and a young woman—under thirty, certainly; perhaps under twenty, for it is very difficult for Northern eyes to estimate age where the malaria fiend has left his hateful traces on the features. To one who looked on that figure with a sympathetic eye and imaginative fancy there would appear no exaggeration in saying that an entire poem

could have been read in the pose, in the expression, and in the appearance of it—a poem too clearly of a tragic sort, in which not only “sweet, solemn thoughts of death and of decay” would be mingled with human interests, still so strangely lingering where no other thoughts might have been supposed capable of intruding, and with the aspects of a nature singularly and suggestively beautiful, despite the curse which taints it; but in which also many a high topic of faith and belief, of human law and human lawlessness, of governments and creeds, and of all that they can make or mar for man, would have due place. No less surely than St. Peter’s dome was this lone figure the legitimate and normal outcome of all that Rome has begotten and tolerated during the centuries that have elapsed since first she sat herself in purple upon her seven hills.

Despite the exceeding poverty of all her surroundings, and despite the ravages which the insidious disease in whose very stronghold she lived had made in her appearance, she was not devoid of many of the graces of youthful womanhood. Or it might be more correct to say that it was very possible to see that many such would have been hers had she been trans-



planted into other surroundings. She was tall but what should have been slender gracefulness of figure had become haggard emaciation. The Southern wealth of rich black hair had defied the destructive power of the poisonous air, but the skin, which should have made lovely contrast to the raven hue of the silken tresses, was no longer white, but yellow. The large well-opened dark eyes seemed almost too large, preternaturally large, but there was neither fire nor lustre in them. The lower part of the face was delicately formed, but where ripe lips wreathed with sunny smiles should have been, there were two thin parallel lines of livid hue, closely pressed together, and expressive of nothing save settled, unalterable hopelessness. It is probable that the aspect of the landscape over which she seemed to be dreamily gazing said little or nothing, consciously, to her inward sense. But the utter lifelessness of all that was within her ken, the impenetrable shutting out of all that was beyond, the dreariness of the solitude, were moulding and fashioning her spiritually as well as bodily. Immediately on her left hand was the old wall, almost calcined by the suns of centuries, and within it the dead body of the town. Summer and winter, day



and night, she waked and slept a solitary watcher by the side of that dead body. Did it ever occur to the reader to conceive what would be the effect on his imagination of an utterly silent city? It can hardly have happened that he should have experienced it. And it would, in truth, be difficult for the most imaginative to figure forth to their fancy the unspeakably weird and almost fearful character of the effect produced by such a phenomenon. The utter stillness of some green mountain-side gives calm and rest to a troubled heart, elevates the mind, and seems to invite it to partake in the universal gladness of Nature. But the dead silence of a dead city! It is like savouring with the nostrils the concentrated essence of death. The abandoned graveyards seem to tell scoffingly of the comparative cheerfulness of those *living* places of sepulture which we have been wont to deem dwellings of the dead, though they are peopled by human affections. Here the graveyards are dead indeed, and yet no deader than all the rest around them.

Amid this infinite death the figure before us was the one sole human thing left alive. Seeing that she manifested no intention of addressing or taking any notice of us, we for-

bore speaking to her, but, after a salutation which seemed due to her as apparent mistress of the soil we stood on, turned to our guide and demanded by what means he proposed that we should enter the town, for there was no visible possibility of doing so. The wall had indeed been tumbled down for about half of its original height, but the portion that remained seemed fully sufficient to bar our further progress, and gate or postern there was none to be seen. Thereupon he said something to the woman which induced her wearily and with much apparent unwillingness to rise from her seat and drag her limbs to the further corner of the cottage. There she pointed to a little ladder made of rough sticks, which Shockhead proceeded to draw forth and to erect against the side of the wall. It was much too short for the purpose to which he endeavoured to apply it; but there was a spot where the slipping down bodily, as it seemed, of a portion of the wall, had caused a breach about halfway up, which rendered it practicable, by drawing up the ladder after one, to accomplish the task of climbing to the top in two stages. The afternoon sun was beating on the southern wall with a ferocity which rendered the business in hand

by no means an agreeable one. And it was rendered yet less so by the fact that our ladder had to be placed in the immediate neighbourhood of the shelf on which the beehives before mentioned were ranged. The occupants manifested a far more lively sense of the strangeness of our intrusion into their domain than their mistress had shown. They swarmed out of the hives, flew round and round our heads, and filled all the air with their angry humming, till the ascent of the ladder in the midst of them became a service of danger scarcely less formidable than the scaling of the same wall when it was defended against the attacks of neighbouring powers by the retainers of the Orsini. One of us, at least, did not come out of the enterprise scatheless.

Despite all difficulties, however, we persevered, and finally effected our entrance into the town, leaving our guide (who did not rejoin us till when, some time later, we found our way back to the cottage) to restore the ladder to its owner. A stranger walk than that wandering of ours through the whilom streets of the deserted town, when thus left to our own devices, it would be difficult to conceive. One would hardly have supposed that ruin so complete

could have resulted from the abandonment of some fifty years. It is a recognized and certain fact, though one not easily explained, that the conditions of various districts within the malaria-smitten region are subject to change. Even within the walls of Rome variations in this respect have been observed quite recently. The region around the Lateran, for instance, has within the last few years become much more perniciously affected by the curse than was the case previously. Many such changes have been noticed and recorded from time to time. Galera was doubtless a malaria-smitten spot from time immemorial, but a little more than half a century ago the evil seems to have become intensified to an intolerable degree. Human life became impossible there. Doubtless a degree of the evil which more fortunately circumstanced populations would have deemed altogether unbearable was borne by the unfortunate inhabitants of Galera before they decided on abandoning their homes. I have seen fever-stricken populations in other places in Italy—places in which gaunt, yellow, parchment-skinned figures with shaking limbs wandered about among their wretched dwellings with a miserable semblance of nerveless life which

seemed but a halfway-house between that and death; and yet the poor ghosts clung to their birthplace, and generation after generation of victims was born and lived and died in premature old age under the constant sway of the malaria fiend. The visitation, therefore, that depopulated Galera must have been a terrible one.

The position of the place is just such as the Etrurians were wont to select for their cities, and the probabilities are that an Etruscan city at one time existed on the site, though no remains have been found to corroborate the supposition. There is, as usual, the prominent eminence almost surrounded and cut off from the neighbouring country by a deep and precipitous ravine. On the opposite side of this would have been the necropolis. There are the rocky cliffs, rendered beautiful by the rich and varied growth of evergreens, furnishing exactly the sort of locality in which that ancient people loved to make their final resting-places. And it may well be—so little curious have the later centuries been as to such matters, and so little has been done in the way of examining the soil in such out-of-the-way places, which have for generations past been gradually returning to

the condition of primitive jungle—that their rock-hewn tombs may still be found here. In the Middle Ages Galera was the capital of an independent county. The Orsini were its lords, and held possession of the place till the year 1670, which was much about the period when the head of that great clan ceased to be sovereign prince of Pitigliano and its district, which fell to the all-grasping Medici, then the despotic masters of Tuscany. I suppose that the downfall which this ejection caused involved the other minor Orsini in the family ruin, and that Galera thus passed into ecclesiastical hands, for at the present time we find it owned by a college of Hungarian Jesuits in Rome. And I should think it might be hard to say which landlord's influence was most fatal to anything like social improvement or civilization—that of the tyrannical and ruffian resident feudal lord, or that of the absentee priest. The former alone, at all events, has left material traces of his presence there. The ruins of the castle are picturesque in no ordinary degree: of course, they owe this in a great measure to the exceedingly romantic nature of their surroundings. But the remains of the feudal dwelling are still sufficient to remind the reader of what must



have been the life of the owner of such a house—the hall for feasting, the small and badly-ventilated chambers for sleeping, the chapel for making all square with the unseen powers who in various ways were understood to be the distributors of good and ill luck. Lodgings for various dependants, mainly men-at-arms, make up the rest. Close by these ruins are those of the principal gateway of the town. There is a double archway still standing, and still surmounted by the sculptured escutcheon of the Orsini. It was by this gateway that we ought to have entered the town, and should doubtless have done had not our guide, for motives of his own, the nature of which we were beginning to surmise, caused us to escalate it from the back.

Our ramble through what were once the streets of the town was still more interesting. Ruined feudal castles are not uncommon things in Europe: one has visited and moralized on many such. But this walk among the ruins of ordinary domestic dwellings which fifty years ago had been filled with human families was a new thing to me. I was surprised to find that it had already become difficult to ascertain the directions, crossings, and relative



positions of the streets: Nature makes such haste, especially in these Southern countries, to resist man's intrusion and re-assert her own exclusive proprietorship of the soil. Pavement could be here and there traced for some yards, and then it would altogether disappear beneath a growth of brambles. Hearths, with even the hooks on which to hang the family kettle, might still be seen where not a fathom of wall remained upright and great thickets of nettles occupied the ingle-nook. Here and there a roof remained treacherously supported on rapidly-rotting beams. The amount of ruin, the degree of progress toward an entire return to primitive jungle and absolute effacement of the town, were much greater than I could have supposed possible within fifty years. Some of those who had gone out from thence as children must still be alive—not many, for they all carried forth with them the taint and the mark of the pestilence, and such stricken ones die young. The steeples—or what had been such—of two churches are still remaining, and add much to the picturesque value of the place; and in one or two places we found remains of fresco-painting on fragments of the adjoining walls.

The scene was so novel and (especially as

looked on with the knowledge we had of the cause of it) so suggestive, that we lingered among the strange commingling of ruined walls with brushwood till the slanting rays of the declining sun warned us that we must stay on that spot no longer, if we would avoid the fate of its last owners. We might have left the town by the gateway, and could doubtless have very easily found our way back to the place where we had left our carriage without our guide; but this would have been rather hard lines upon him, and so we made our way back to the spot where we had climbed the wall, and found him, as we had expected, still there; and having again put the ladder in requisition, we left Galera by the way we had entered it.

But we did not start on our walk back to Santa Maria till we had in some degree satisfied the curiosity which had been excited in our minds by the sole inhabitant of Galera. She had not very long been such. About a couple of years previously she had lost a surviving sister, after having seen father, mother, and brothers die in the fatal place. Whether the family had lived in the town, or whether the strange jumble of stones and loose bricks and wattled hurdles which formed the shelter of the

sole survivor at the time of our visit had been the habitation of the whole family, I am not sure, but I am inclined to believe the former was the case. It may have been that the location under that sun-baked southern wall had seemed somewhat less deadly than the interior of the ruined town. Or it may have been that even that solitary woman, "to the manner born," whose very cradle was fanned by breezes laden with malaria, and to whom desolation, abandonment and ruin must have been the normal and accustomed sights of infancy, whose earliest playground must have been desolate hearths and unroofed chambers, had found it too intolerable to be the sole daily and nightly sojourner in the midst of that dead town. When we found her she was the undisputed owner of the cottage, such as it was, of the little attempt at a garden, of the vegetables it produced, of a rather numerous collection of fowls and young broods of chickens, and of a whole long shelf of beehives. And this heiress-ship had brought with it the usual consequences of that condition of life. The hand of the heiress was sought in marriage—solely, it may be feared, for the sake of what it would carry with it. The reader has guessed already what

the motive was that induced our shockheaded, sheepskin-breeched guide to bring us to Galera by the very inconvenient path he had selected, and why he had remained behind while we were rambling about the town. Yes, Shockhead was engaged the while in pressing his suit. It was, as we learned from his very candid communication on our way back to Santa Maria, not a very successful one ; and I hope that the heiress of Galera may have since continued to show herself equally obdurate. For though his intentions were what is conventionally termed "strictly honourable," he made not the smallest difficulty of owning to us that they were of the most entirely mercenary description. He related the little story of his courtship much as he might have spoken of his bargaining for the purchase or sale of a calf or a goat. He himself possessed absolutely nothing save the garments that more or less imperfectly covered him. He was the son of the herdsman in the employment of the keeper of the *osteria*, who was also the holder of the farm on which it was situated. But the heiress of Galera had absolutely scraped together the value of one or two napoleons ; and this fact Shockhead considered to be at the same time the greatest

incitement to perseverance in his suit and the greatest obstacle to its success. All he had to urge as a makeweight on his own side was the argument that his arms and sinews would be available in turning that desirable freehold property under the wall of Galera to far greater profit than the unassisted efforts of the proprietress could succeed in doing. Such may possibly have been the case; nevertheless, our short acquaintance with our friend Shockhead would have led me, had I had any opportunity of doing so, to counsel the heiress of Galera to persevere in turning a deaf ear to his entreaties.

“ I BUTTERI.”





## “I BUTTERI.”

You remember the Piazza della Bocca della Verità at Rome? No? Perhaps it is too far away from the Piazza di Spagna and the stairs of the Monte di Trinità, which may be taken to be the central points of English or American Rome. Yet you must have passed by the Bocca della Verità on your way to your drive on the Via Appia and the tomb of Cæcilia Metella. Do you not remember a large, shambling, unkempt-looking open space, a sort of cross in appearance between the *piazza* of a city and a farmyard, a little after passing the remains of the Teatro di Marcello, the grand old arches of which are now, in the whirligig of Time's revenges, turned into blacksmiths' shops? The piazza in question is nearly open on one side to the Tiber, on the immediate bank

of which stands that elegant little round temple, with its colonnade of charming fluted pillars, which has from time out of mind been known as the Temple of Vesta, though the designation, as modern archæologists tell us, is probably erroneous. All the world, whether of those who have been at Rome or not, knows the Temple of Vesta, for it is the prettiest, if not the grandest, of the legacies to us of old pagan Rome, and it has been reproduced in little drawing-room models by the thousand in every conceivable material. Close to it, at one corner of the piazza, is the ancient and half-ruinous house which is pointed out as the habitation of Cola di Rienzi. It is altogether a strange-looking spot, that Piazza della Bocca della Verità, standing as it does on the confines of what may be called the inhabited part of Rome and that portion of the huge space within the walls which still remains sacred to the past and its memories and remains. But not the least strange thing about it is its name—the *Piazza of the Mouth of Truth!* There is a story of some one of the great doctors of the early ages of Christianity having taught in the very ancient church which stands on the side of the piazza farthest from the Tiber. Aye, to be sure,

the name must come very evidently thence. The "mouth of truth" was the mouth of that seraphic or angelic or golden-tongued or other "doctor gentium," and the old church and the piazza still preserve the memory of his eloquence. Not a bit of it! Under the venerable-looking portico of this church there is a huge colossal marble mask, with a gaping mouth in the middle of it. There it lies, totally unconnected in any way with the various other relics of the past around it—tombs and frescoes and mosaics—and the stranger wonders what it is, and how it came there. To the last question there is no reply. But in answer to the former, tradition says that the Roman populace, when affirming anything on oath, were wont to place their hands in the mouth of this mask as a form of swearing, and hence the stone was called the "Bocca della Verità," and has given its name to the piazza.

Well, it was while traversing this piazza a few days since with a stranger friend, whom I was taking to visit the curious old church above mentioned, that I received and returned the salutation of an acquaintance whose appearance induced my companion to ask with some little surprise who my friend was. The individual

whose courteous salutation had provoked the question was a horseman mounted on a remarkably fine black mare. Whether in consequence of some little touch with the spur, or whether merely from high condition and high spirits, the animal was curveting and rearing and dancing about a little as she crossed the piazza, and the perfect ease—and one may say, indeed, elegance—of the rider's seat, and his consummate mastery of the animal he bestrode, must have attracted the attention and excited the admiration of any lover of horses and horsemanship. It was abundantly evident that he was neither one of the “gentlemen riders” who figure in the somewhat mild Roman steeplechase races, nor of those Nimrods from beyond the Alps who, mounted on such steeds as Jarrett or Rannucci can supply them with, attend the “meets” of the Roman hunt. The man in question was very unlike any of these; his horse was quite as unlike any that such persons are wont to ride; and his seat upon his horse and his mode of riding were yet more unlike theirs. It was not the seat of a man accustomed to “go across the country” and rideto hounds and still less was it the seat of a cavalry-man, the result of teaching in a military riding-school.

It was more like the seat (if the expression be permissible) of a centaur. The rider and his steed seemed to be one organization, and governed by one and the same will.

But I must endeavour to give the reader an idea of the outward appearance of my acquaintance. He wore a long horseman's cloak of dark-brown cloth, with a deep fur collar, which hung loosely from his shoulders, and being entirely open in front, displayed a scarlet waistcoat ornamented with silver buttons beneath it, and thighs clad in black velveteen breeches. His lower legs were cased in gaiters of a very peculiar make. They were of light-brown coloured leather, so made as to present an altogether creaseless surface, and yet fitted to the leg by numerous straps and buckles so closely that they exhibited the handsome and well-formed limb beneath them almost as perfectly as a silk stocking could have done. Below the ankle they closely clasped a boot which was armed with a very severe spur. The rider wore a high conical black felt hat—such a hat as is called, significantly enough, "*un cappello de brigante*," a brigand's hat. It had, moreover, a scarlet ribbon around it, which added much to the brigand-like picturesqueness

of the figure. Yet my friend was by no means a brigand, for all that. But the portion of his accoutrement which was perhaps the most remarkable has not been mentioned yet. While managing his reins, snaffle, and curb with excellent ease in his left hand, his right held—not a whip or stick of any sort, but—a lance like a rod, some seven or eight feet long, and armed at the end with a short iron spike. This spike rested on the toe of his boot as he rode—an attitude which, resembling that of a cavalier entering the tournament lists, gave to the rod in question all the appearance of a knightly lance. Yet there is in the recollection or the imagination of most people another figure whom on the whole the rider in the Piazza della Bocca della Verità would have been more likely to recall to their minds—the mounted Arab of the desert. I hardly know why it should be so; but there was a something about the general outline of the figure draped in its cloak, and in the way in which the long slight lance was held, that had an unmistakably Eastern look about it. There was a certain air of dignity, too, about my friend which contributed to his Arab-like appearance; yet it was not exactly the dignity of the grave and impassible Eastern



man. It was a mixture of dignity and jauntiness. There was a certain air of self-consciousness about the man in the cloak and brigand's hat that told you clearly enough that he knew he was riding remarkably well, and expected you to mark it too. He would have been exceedingly unwilling that the glories of the scarlet waistcoat with its silver buttons should have been eclipsed, and he would have unmistakably fallen in his own esteem had the broad scarlet ribbon been taken from his hat. The *pose* and turn of his well-shaped head on his shoulders provocatively challenged admiration, and would have had a dash of insolence in them if the expression had not been corrected by a pleasant smile, which showed a range of bright white teeth beneath a jet-black moustache, and the good-humour of the glance that tempered the frank roving boldness of the well-opened eye. When it has been added that he was in the very prime of manhood, a man of some thirty-five or thereabouts, I think that the reader will be able to form a tolerably correct picture to himself of my acquaintance, Nanni Silvani.

"And who and what is Nanni Silvani?" asked my companion, when I had categorically



answered his question by stating the name of the rider whose salutation I had returned.

“Nanni—or, more correctly, Signor Giovanni—Silvani is a *buttero* of the Roman Campagna,” said I.

“And, pray, what may a ‘*buttero*’ be?” rejoined my Johnny Newcome, looking back after the receding figure of the horseman with no little curiosity.

“A *buttero*,” I answered, “is one of the most peculiar and characteristic products of that very peculiar region the *Agro Romano*.”

The conditions under which the district around Rome is cultivated—or rather possessed and left uncultivated—are entirely *sui generis*—quite unlike anything else in the world. The vast undulating plain called the Campagna is divided among very few proprietors in comparison to its extent, who hold immense estates, which are more profitable than the appearance of the country, smitten to all seeming with a curse of desolation, would lead a stranger to suppose. These huge properties are held mainly by the great Roman papal families and by monastic corporations whose monasteries are within the city. In either case the property is practically inalienable, and has been passed

from father to son for generations, or held by an undying religious corporation in unchanging sameness for many generations. Cultivation in the proper sense of the word is out of the question in this region: the prevalence of the deadly malaria renders it impossible. But the vast extent of the plain is wandered over by large herds of half-wild cattle, in great part buffaloes, the produce of which is turned to profit in large dairy and cheese-making establishments, and by large droves of horses, from which a very useful breed of animals is raised. The superintendence and care of these is the work of the buttero. Large flocks of sheep and goats also are fed upon the herbage of the Campagna. But the shepherds who tend them are quite a different race of men from the buttero, and are deemed, especially by himself, to hold a far inferior position in the social scale. And, as is ever the case, social prejudice justifies itself by producing the phenomenon it has declared to exist. The shepherd of the Campagna, having long been deemed the very lowest of the low, has become such in reality. Clad in the dried but untanned skin of one of his flock, he has almost the appearance of a savage, and, unless common fame belies him,

he is the savage he looks. The buttero looks down upon him from a very pinnacle of social elevation in the eyes of every inhabitant of the towns and villages around Rome, especially in those of the youthful female population. While the poor shepherd, shaggy as his sheep, wild-looking as his goats, and savage as his dogs, squalid, fever-stricken and yellow, spending long weeks and even months in solitude amid the desolation of the Campagna, saunters after his sauntering flock, crawling afoot, the gallant buttero, in the saddle from morning to night, represents that aristocracy which, among all uncivilized races and in all uncivilized times, is the attribute of the mounted as distinguished from the unmounted portion of mankind. And if this fact is recognized by the generality of the world in which he lives, it is very specially assumed to be undeniable by the buttero himself. There is always a smack of the dandy about him. He is proud of his appearance, of his horse, and of his mastery over him. He knows that he is a picturesque and striking figure, and the consciousness of the fact imparts a something to his bearing that is calculated to make the most of it. His manners and ways of life, too, are really more tinged by civiliza-

tion than those of the rest of the rural population among whom he lives. And this arises mainly from the fact that his occupations bring him more and more frequently into contact with his superiors in the social scale.

The agricultural system prevailing in the district around Rome differs markedly and essentially from that in use generally in Tuscany. There the system of rent is almost unknown. The present tiller of the soil occupies it on condition of rendering to the landowner the half of the produce of it, and this arrangement is conducted under the superintendence of a *fattore*. But the wide-spreading possessions of a Roman landowner are for the most part let to a speculator, who is termed a "mercante di campagna." The commercial operations engaged in by these "merchants of the country" are often very extensive, and many of them become very wealthy men. It is hardly necessary to say that neither they nor their families live on, or indeed in most cases near, the land from which they draw their wealth. They are absentees, with a paramount excuse for being so. For the vast plains over which their herds and flocks and droves wander are for the most part scourged by the malaria

to such an extent that human life, or at all events human health, is incompatible with a residence on them. The wealthy *mercante di campagna* lives in Rome therefore, and his wife and family take the lead in the rich, but not in the aristocratic, circles of the society of the capital. One of these men may be seen perhaps at a "meet" of the Roman hunt, mounted on the best and most showy horse in the field, attended probably by a smart groom leading a second (very needless) horse for his master's use, or holding in readiness an elegant equipage for him to drive himself back to the city at the termination of the day's sport. His wife and daughters meanwhile are probably exhibiting themselves in the Villa Borghese or on the Pincian Hill in the handsomest carriage and with the most splendid horses in all the gay throng, and displaying toilettes which throw into the shade the more sober style of those of the duchesses, princesses, and countesses whom they would so gladly, but may not, salute as they pass them in their less brilliant equipages. The balls, too, given in the Carnival by these men and their wives will probably be the most splendid of the season, in so far as the expenditure of money can ensure splendour, but they

will not be adorned by the diamonds of the old patrician families, nor will it be possible for the givers of them to obtain access to the sighed-for elysium of the halls of the historical palaces where those diamonds are native. Between the two classes there is a great gulf fixed, or perhaps it would be more accurately correct to say that there *was* such a great gulf fixed a year or two ago. The great gulf exists still, but it is beginning gradually to be a little bridged over. No doubt another twenty years will see it vanish altogether. But enough has been said to indicate the social position of the mercante di campagna as it was, and for the most part still is. But, fine gentleman as he is, the wealthy speculator, if he would remain such, is not always at the hunt or lounging in the Corso. He is often at the *tenuta* (or estate) from which his wealth is gathered, and on such occasions spends long hours on horseback riding over wide extents of country, and attended by the all-important buttero, sure to be mounted on as good a horse as that which carries his employer, or perhaps a better. Perhaps two or three of these functionaries are in attendance upon him. And such excursions necessarily produce a degree of companionship which would



not result from attendance in any other form. As riders the two men are on an equality for the nonce. The tone of communication between the men is insensibly modified by the circumstances of a colloquy between two persons on horseback. It cannot be the same as that between a master sitting in his chair and a servant standing hat in hand before him. And then how proudly does the gallant buttero ride past the pariah shepherds tending their shaggy flocks and seeming barely raised above them in intelligence!

All this tends, as may be supposed, to civilize the buttero to a degree that he would not attain without it. He is, as has been intimated, generally eminently self-conscious of his own advantages, and proud of his position. To the other elements which go to produce this feeling may be added the pride of caste. Our buttero is probably the son and the father of a race which follows the same occupation. The knowledge and skill which are absolutely necessary to his profession, and which are acquired no otherwise than traditionally, have a tendency to produce this result. He grew up to be a buttero, with a consummate knowledge of horses and horned cattle, and a sure eye for the condition of the



pastures from one to another district of which the animals are constantly moving, under the eye of his father, who put him on a half-broken colt almost as soon as he could walk. And he is giving his son the same education. For a young buttero to marry with a daughter of the despised shepherd class would be a *mésalliance* not to be thought of. Nor would a marriage with the daughter of a small artisan of the towns be deemed a very acceptable one. The chances are that the young centaur marries a girl of his own centaur breed, and all the prejudice and barriers of caste are thus propagated and intensified.

It must not be supposed that the buttero or his family lives on the malaria-stricken plains which his occupation requires him to be constantly riding over. The wretched shepherd is constrained to do so, and sleeps in the vicinity of his flock, finding, if he can, the shelter of a ruined tomb or of the broken arch of an aqueduct, or even of a cave from which *pozzolana* has been dug, and strives to exorcise the malaria fiend by kindling a big fire and sleeping with his head in the thick smoke of it. But the buttero, well-mounted, to whom it is a small matter to ride eight or ten miles to his home

every night, lives with his family either in Rome or in one of the small towns on the slopes of the hills which enclose the Campagna. And it is thus that these strikingly picturesque figures may often be seen traversing the streets and *piazze* of Rome, and especially of those parts of it which lie on the far side of the Tiber, or to the southward of the Quirinal Hill, and the Piazza di Venezia. They are almost always handsome fellows, well grown, and striking specimens of robust and manly vigour, probably by virtue of the lives they lead, and of the similar lives the race from which they spring have led before them; partly also, no doubt, from the fact that should any son be born to a *buttero* who should not be thus happily endowed, he could not think of following the ancestral occupation, but would have to be weeded out from the race and seek his place in the towns, where he would not become the father of degenerate *butteri*.

My friend Nanni Silvani was all that I have described the *buttero* to be. He was indeed a very perfect specimen of his class; and if the reader will allow me to tell him how I first came to be acquainted with Nanni, the relation of the circumstances will at the same time show

him one of the most remarkable phases of the buttero's life, and one of the most curiously characteristic scenes of Italian—and especially Roman—life which it falls to the lot of few foreign visitors to witness.

It will be readily understood that the cattle, whether horned beasts or horses, which wander from pasture to pasture over the vast extent of the Campagna are liable to stray occasionally, and perhaps to become mingled with the herds belonging to another proprietor. It is necessary, therefore, that they should be *marked*; and this marking is the occasion of a great and very remarkable festival and solemnity. It is called *La Merca*, which is a Romanism for *La Marca*, the "mark" or "marking" of the cattle. This operation takes place in the spring, generally in May; and the mercante di campagna whose herds of horned cattle, oxen, cows and buffaloes and droves of horses are to be marked, on a settled day invites all his friends and acquaintance to come and see the operation. From what has already been said of the social habits and status of the persons occupying that position, it will be readily imagined that the company thus called together is often a very numerous and sufficiently brilliant one. A good

half of the assemblage will in all probability belong to the more ornamental sex. A liberally supplied pic-nic luncheon will not fail to complete the pleasures of the day; and altogether the festival of the *merca* of such or such a year will probably remain as an epoch in the memories of many of those invited to be present. The carriages, the horses, the light country gigs and conveyances of all kinds must be ordered early in the pleasant May morning, for a drive (or ride) of several miles across the Campagna is before us, and perhaps before the spot appointed for the business in hand is reached a scramble across a mile or so of open rolling ground impracticable for wheels. But nothing can be more lovely than the views of the hills around Rome in the fresh early hours of a May morning. Even the melancholy Campagna puts on a look of brightness and smiles a pale smile for the nonce. We soon overtake or are overtaken by other parties bound for the same destination. All are chatting and laughing in high good spirits, for the spectacle that awaits us is a favourite one with the Roman dames and their attendant squires. There are very few, if any, foreigners among the invited, partly because it hardly

comes in their way to hear anything about the *merca* and its specialties, or to make the acquaintance of the hosts upon such occasions; partly and mainly perhaps because they have almost all of them left Rome for the summer before the season for these rural festivals commences.

At length we reach the ground. A large hollow in the undulating surface of the Campagna, surrounded in great part by a steeply rising bank, has been chosen as the scene of operations, in order to afford as much vantage-ground as may be for the spectators. But other accommodation than such as is afforded by Nature has been provided. A range of seats of rough planks, something in the form of the grand stand on a race-course, has been erected by the hospitable mercante di campagna, who is busily engaged in receiving and seating his numerous friends. Large droves of young horses, and still larger herds of bullocks and buffaloes, are assembled in a neighbouring yard. Before taking our places on the range of seats we go to have a look at this portion of the *dramatis personæ* in the coming spectacle—from the *outside*, be it understood, of a high railed palisade, or *stazzionata*, as this description of enclosure is

called in the language of the Roman Campagna. The appearance of the animals inside, of the buffaloes especially, does not tempt one to make any nearer acquaintance with them. The wild cattle of the Western prairies can hardly look wilder or more savage. Whether the buffaloes are in reality more savage in their temper than the other horned cattle or not seems to be a doubtful question. Some of the herdsmen say they are so: others deny it. Possibly the former may have the more sensitive imaginations, for unquestionably the buffalo is a far more terrible-looking fellow than his congener. His dark colour and the form of the vicious-looking crumply horn in great part contribute to this. But it seems to me that the expression of the eye produces the same effect to a yet greater degree. The buffalo's eye is smaller than that of the ordinary bull or cow, and often gleams out of the shaggy thicket of black hair around it with a red glare that has something truly diabolical in it. There may perhaps be collected in the yard and in one or two enclosures near it some forty or fifty young horses, and perhaps altogether from a hundred to a hundred and fifty head of horned cattle. Lounging about around these enclosures, or



looking on while the last completing touches are given to the strong and high railing which surrounds the space in front of the range of seats, are several butteri and their aids awaiting the master's signal for the beginning of the day's work.

Altogether, the scene is a very strange one. The contact of the rural and the city life, the elements of which meet in these countries so rarely, and mix so little and so unwillingly, seems strange and incongruous. Nothing can be wilder than all the local surroundings of the scene; nothing less town-like than the living things, human and other, which are to enact their parts in it; nothing less rural, nothing more completely of the town townish, than the assembled company of spectators. Evidently, the individuals belonging to either category look upon those of the other very little in the light of fellow-creatures. In no country in the world is the division between the town population and that of the country so wide as it is in Italy. No one of either class seems to be struck by, or even to see, the extreme beauty of the prospect from the spot on which we are standing. It is a spot in the Campagna somewhat to the south-west of a line drawn from the



city to the base of the Alban Hills; and though the place chosen for the operation of the *merca* is, as I have said, a hollow, the generality of the immediate neighbourhood is somewhat higher than the level of the surrounding plain, and the eye is thus enabled to wander far and wide over the Campagna—to the Alban Hills southward; to the peak of Monte Cavo, where the early rays of the sun are just touching with light the old gray walls of the convent on its summit; to the large village of Rocca di Papa on its hillside a little further to the left; to the town of Grotto Ferrata on the lowest instep of the hill, and more still to the left; and then Frascati, with the heights of Tusculum above it; and thence to that wonderfully beautiful opening in the range of hills where Preneste lies; and beyond that, as we turn the delighted eye slowly round to the eastward, the olive-rich hill of Tivoli, the woods that mark the position of Hadrian's Villa, and the whole range of the Sabine Hills. But little do the Roman dames care for the scene so fair. Their eyes are all for matters nearer at hand. They are curiously scanning the men who are going to be the heroes of the day—the *butteri*—some sitting carelessly on their horses, some

lounging around the enclosure. And well aware are these, in either case, that they are the cynosures of neighbouring eyes, and the consciousness that they are so is betrayed in every movement and every glance of their roving eyes. Never did knights of old enter the lists, while the heralds reminded them that bright eyes beheld their deeds, more stimulated to bear themselves well in the coming contest than are these modern knights of the Campagna to show their prowess in the ring which is to witness a not less arduous and hardly less dangerous emprise.

At length the hospitably busy mercante di campagna has seated all his guests, and the work of the day may begin. Some half-dozen or so of butteri and their aids enter the arena, which is thoroughly enclosed on all sides by high and secure palisades. The long cloaks are discarded now, as may be supposed. I hardly know when else the butteri are to be seen without them or on foot. Now they are seen as succinct as may be. Every muscle is braced up for the coming struggle, and there may be observed something in the faces and bearing of the men that indicates that the work in hand is not expected to be child's play. They stand in a

group in the middle of the enclosed space. The day's work will begin with the most arduous part of it—with that which needs all the fresh strength and address of the men—the marking of the buffaloes. A young buffalo bull, not yet grown to his full strength, but yet abundantly powerful enough to be a very formidable antagonist, is driven into the arena, and the gate by which he has entered is immediately closed behind him. Many a yearling of the more domesticated breeds is a larger and heavier animal, and yet most men would, if they were compelled to such a struggle, prefer to measure their force against an animal of the latter class rather than against this half-savage creature. He may be considered, indeed, to be wholly savage, save in so far as he may be supposed to inherit from his progenitors the nature of a race that man has more or less perfectly subjected and compelled to labour. On first entering the arena he tosses up his head and shakes the shaggy black locks of wiry hair from before his small wicked-looking eyes, looks half alarmedly, half defiantly around, and stamps three or four times with one fore foot on the ground, partly, as it would seem, in wonder and doubt, and partly in increasing anger. Then he trots slowly round

the enclosure, starting aside and shying as the bright colours of the ladies' dresses (at safe distance behind the palisades) catch and offend his eye. Evidently he is seeking an egress and escape from a scene which must appear to him so wondrous and full of strange and unknown dangers. But he has soon satisfied himself that there is no way out, that his enemies have encompassed him about on every side. Then once again he throws his shaggy head into the air, shaking his short thick curly horns in a very menacing manner, and this time accompanying the action with a loud bellow, the compound expression of fear, wonder, and wrath.

Now, what has to be done is simply this—to seize him, throw him to the ground on his side, then to impress the branding-iron on his flank, and dismiss him to make way for another. Of course, nothing would be easier with properly contrived appliances and means than to accomplish this with promptitude, safety to man and beast, without struggle and without glory. But this would involve change of habitudes, recourse to new methods, modern improvements, a confession to the mind of the buttero that he was no longer able to do what his fathers for many a generation had done before him. It

would be to lose the opportunity of exhibiting himself and his prowess on the great festival of the year, together with those subsequent hours of repose and reward for danger and fatigue endured which heroes of all ages, from the quaffers of mead in the halls of Odin to the “food for powder” around the vivandière’s paniers, have never disdained. For these sufficient reasons the *merca* is practiced still in the old way in the Roman Campagna, and the victory of the man over the brute has to be achieved by main force and dexterity. The buttero has not so much as a lasso, or even a halter or a stick, to assist him in the struggle. There is the beast with his horns, and there is the man with his hands. Probably it might have been better to seize the creature instantly on his entry into the arena, while he was under the influence of his first bewilderment; and doubtless, when the men have got hot to their work, and the advancing sun warns them to get on with it, the business will be more summarily despatched. But in the first opening of the day’s work a little show-off is indulged in. The buffalo has ceased his trot round the railing, and stands head in air as he bellows his defiance. That is the moment

seized by the watchful buttero for accepting the challenge. With a sudden spring at the animal he seizes him by the horns, and with a vigorous and knowingly applied wrench throws him to the ground on his side. Then burst forth the plaudits from the well-dressed crowd, more heartily bestowed perhaps by the ladies than by their kid-gloved cavaliers, who are conscious that they could not have done so much to save their own lives or those of the fair dames by their side. With the fall of the beast to the ground the work is done. All the rest is without difficulty, and is completed in a minute. Other men come forward and apply the brand to the struggling but comparatively helpless brute, who in the next minute finds himself free from his persecutors and at liberty to trot off out of the enclosure.

Thus matters pass in a case where the buttero is master of his business, where he is in his own best condition of muscular force and activity, and where he is not matched against a beast of exceptional strength. It frequently occurs, however, that all these conditions are not fulfilled. Some men are cleverer at it than others. It will be readily understood that, as in wrestling, the knack of the thing counts for much, and some-



times, either from want of this or some other circumstance of disadvantage, the struggle is prolonged. Man and beast put forth their utmost strength. They sway backward and forward; the ground becomes trampled into mud; the strong muscles of the creature's brawny neck resist every effort of his enemy. Not a man of the group within the area comes to the assistance of his comrade. They watch the contest indeed with vigilant eyes, and should real danger to the man's life ensue, they are ready to throw themselves forward and overpower or drive off the buffalo. But short of this the fight must be a duel. The man must throw his beast, or be thrown. Not unfrequently, the latter occurs; and then the city crowd, who were so loud in their plaudits of the victor—cruel as their ancestors whose upturned thumbs condemned the conquered gladiator in the Coliseum—are equally loud in their hooting of the prostrate buttero. But only his self-love and self-respect, and not his life, in these days, pays the penalty. As he falls worsted, his fellows, watchful to prevent mischief, though perhaps not sorry for a rival's discomfiture, rush forward and overpower the conquering brute.



And this goes on until the assembled butteri and their aids have got through their day's work and marked all the animals that were awaiting the brand, and the *merca* for that year is finished. The citizens, dames, and dandies get them back to their carriages and to the city, while the butteri, victors and vanquished alike, spend the night in discussing the vicissitudes of the *merca*, and worshipping Bacchus with rites which, in this most conservative of all lands, two thousand years have done but little to change.



A PREFECT AND A PREFECTURE  
IN SICILY.



## A PREFECT AND A PREFECTURE IN SICILY.

THE institution of prefects seems to be a specialty of the Latin race—not the name only, but the thing as well. To modern Frenchmen a world without prefects is as inconceivable as a universe without a sun. They inquire with much curiosity, but fruitlessly—because by no effort can the reply be made intelligible to them—how, in the absence of prefects, the English government “communicates with the country.” Italy, when it came into possession of its new liberty, very naturally went to work to model its institutions on those of its big neighbour, and split up the territory of the new kingdom into prefectures. I suspect that Italy is beginning to understand from her experience in this

matter that “*Decipit exemplum vitiis imitabile*,” and that she would fain be rid of her prefects and prefectures. But they are things which, like the monster Frankenstein, once created, are very difficult to be got rid of. That the minister who appoints prefects, and to whose power they largely contribute, should be averse to losing this patronage and this power is extremely intelligible. But this is not all. The unfortunate recipient of a present of a white elephant, costly and inconvenient as he may find the animal, would hardly be pleased, unless he were a much more philosophic philosopher than Italians are wont to be in such matters, if all his neighbours had received white elephants, and he alone were left thus undistinguished. And the old rivalry between city and city in this land of enduring rivalries makes it exceedingly difficult to begin any attempt to diminish the plague of prefects by any partial measure of abolition. Besides, prefects, like most other mortal things, are not wholly evil. They give balls in the larger cities, sometimes dinners; they patronize; they create miniature local aristocracies, and perform that singular social office called “giving *ton* ;” they make fashion; they establish and mark the distinc-



tion between somebodies and nobodies. All this is very useful in creating those jealousies and ambitions which impart the much-needed salt to life in sleepy provincial towns. But this is not all. There are many considerations of a more solid nature which make a city which has once tasted the dignity of having a prefect unwilling to lose him. Patronage, so valuable everywhere, is nowhere more highly valued than in Italy. The power of dispensing to others wherewithal to eat is next in desirability to having wherewithal one's self. A prefect has satellites of various sorts, who revolve around him as he around the great central sun, the Minister of the Interior, and each one of these satellites has his little cosmical system :

“Thus large fleas have little fleas upon their backs  
to bite 'em,

And little fleas have smaller fleas, and so *ad infinitum*.”

The dictum is as true of the social world, especially in these latitudes, as it is of the physical. And, of course, not a single blood-sucker in all the series but is ready to fight tooth and nail for the maintenance of the central sun of the system to which he belongs. From all which it follows that while the institution of prefects is an element of primary

importance, no less in the social than in the bureaucratic Italian world, the history of sundry of these functionaries offers a series of very curious illustrations of the peculiar circumstances under which the present order of things, social and governmental, in Italy, has been evolved from that which so recently preceded it.

Take, for example, the Marchese di Roccanuda, Prefect of Campomagro in Monte, in the island of Sicily. The marchese is not a Sicilian. He is the descendant of a long line of Neapolitan marchesi, who, from having once been the possessors of vast domains, seem to have come down, by an admirably gradual and gentle process of decline, always steady from century to century, but never moving by dislocating jumps, to the position of possessors of an exceedingly noble name, a title, a tumbledown old palace in Naples, and nothing else in the world. The dilapidated old Roccanuda palace had long ago been mortgaged for more than it was now worth; and the marchese was so well aware of the fact, that he never attempted to interfere in any way with the screw processes by which the mortgagees wrung the utmost obtainable centime from the miserable hordes who found shelter under that noble but far from weather-

tight roof, using it more after the fashion that rabbits use a warren than that in which human beings use a house. Under these circumstances, how was the marchese to live and perform the almost equally necessary duty of preventing his noble name from becoming extinct? Who could have asked such a question in the good old times when Bomba the Last was king? Of course, the necessity of giving the marchese some position at court which should enable him to live in some degree as a marchese should—*i.e.*, without doing anything from rosy morn to dewy eve—was equally manifest to the marchese and to his sovereign. So he received the appointment of Grand Deputy-Assistant Pocket-handkerchief Holder to His Majesty, and had a deputy with a small *d* to do the duty of the Deputy with a big *D*, which consisted in drawing his salary. This was such as compelled the marchese and marchesa—for the “position” was one that enabled the nobleman to take to himself a noble wife—to live mainly on macaroni in a garret, the inside of the door of which no human being, save the noble family and one servant-girl, was ever allowed to see, but at the same time to appear on the outside of that door unexceptionably clad, to have a

carriage with a very grandly emblazoned coat-of-arms on the panels, and a couple of half-starved job horses to draw it, and to appear occasionally at the opera. And thus matters went on, to the contentment of all parties, in a normal and satisfactory condition, until one day a terrible blast blew from the north, and King Bomba and his court were driven before it like chaff before the wind. And what was to become of the Grand Deputy-Assistant Pocket-handkerchief Holder? The young marchese—for the Grand Deputy had by that time a son of eighteen and a daughter a year younger—left the paternal roof and clandestinely joined Garibaldi. The father was by no means angry, and had considerable doubts whether the move was not the best one then on the board. However, that phase of the young marchese's career is never referred to now, save, perhaps, by a vague phrase or two as to his having bled on the field for the liberty of his country. The marchese himself dived and disappeared for a short period, and came to the surface again in Turin, of all places in the world! It must be supposed that the consciousness of his own tried administrative abilities made him feel that he should be needed

in this crisis of his country's fortunes. And it would seem that the feeling prompted him aright, for at the first settling of the newly-acquired kingdom the Marchese di Roccanuda was named prefect of Campomagro in Monte. Of course the Garibaldians, who had driven out King Bomba and made Victor Emmanuel a present of Naples and Sicily, thought that prefectures and sub-prefectures and all other such good things should be divided among them. The men at Turin who were charged with the government of the entire new kingdom, and who, to tell the plain truth, felt themselves embarrassed in the face of diplomatic Europe by the irregularity of the modes which had made them masters of the southern half of the kingdom, and half ashamed of the bigness of the present they were accepting at the hands of the successful adventurer, did not see the thing in the same light. They were not altogether unjustly afraid of the possible, and indeed probable, results of such a distribution of the spoils of the new conquest; and they were further largely influenced by the old social *convenances* and prejudices and caste connections, existing not perhaps so much in their own breasts as in those of the crowd of sub-



ordinate agents by whom and through whom they had to work. Besides this, again, there arose the question whether all the members of the Roccanuda and other similarly circumstanced families were to be left to absolute and pitiless starvation. And this was a question not only of humanity, but of policy. The Neapolitan nation had not been disposed to fight for King Bomba, even to such an extent as might have been necessary to overwhelm the small force of Garibaldi; but it did not follow that a large part of the nation was not disposed in Bomba's behalf to make the country ungovernable by anybody else. On the contrary, it was very well known that there was such a large class of persons, mainly to be found among those who had belonged to the ruling class of the country, who were eager to do so. And these were men who could not be conquered, because they would neither fight nor even declare themselves to be enemies, but might be bought, because they were quite willing to sell themselves, in many cases easing their consciences by determining to do as little as might be, when the bargain should have been made, towards performing their part of it. It is very questionable whether prudence would

not have counselled the men of Victor Emmanuel's government to give far more weight to this last consideration in their deliberations on the subject than they seem to have done.

And thus it came to pass that Ippolito Marchese di Roccanuda became, as many others like him became in similar places, prefect of Campomagro in Monte. Doubtless, as was borne in mind at Turin, Campomagro in Monte is not among the more important cities of Italy. It is a city, even according to the orthodox and old world acceptation of that term, for it possesses a bishop and chapter. But, on the other hand, it does not possess any roads to speak of. It is situated among the mountains nearly in the centre of the island; and travelling in that part of the world being rendered by no means agreeable on many accounts, its population is a very isolated and primitive one. The shepherd-lads on the surrounding hills may still be seen piping to their flocks and to the shepherd lasses on the double pipe, so familiar to the classical scholar and so wholly lost to the world everywhere else, just as they did on the same hills two thousand years ago, and probably entertaining very similar ideas of all things in heaven and earth to those which had their place in the brains of



their remote but probably lineal ancestors. Campomagro is not the capital of a fertile district. It probably may have been so once, what time Sicily was the granary of the Roman empire. But Norman, Saracen, Spaniard, and Frenchman have worked their will on the land since then. The forests that protected the hills and regulated the water-supply have perished. The soil has been carried by the torrents from the slopes where it grew grain into the valleys, where it clogs the water-courses and makes marshes and breeds malaria. And, diminished as the population is, it is now as much as the district of Campomagro in Monte can do to keep its own inhabitants half-fed. The city itself is at least free from malaria, being too high above the spots where that foul fiend is generated to be reached by it. It is perched on the top of a rocky hill, and from a distance has a singularly picturesque appearance. The almost black tower of its ancient cathedral stands out in singularly striking contrast to the crowd of dirty white buildings huddled around it. There are fragments of the ancient city walls, too, with a square tower or two, which, standing as they do at the edge of a precipitous cliff, make a great show and produce a most picturesque effect.

But, alas ! 'tis distance lends enchantment to the view. When once you have with painful toil climbed the tortuous bridle-road that leads from the valley below to the dark and frowning archway of the old city gate, and have entered its cavernous mouth, you begin to think that Dante's celebrated inscription on the entrance to the infernal regions would not have been out of place above the gate of Campomagro. Nevertheless, the first sensation on entering is, if you have arrived there, as is probable, in summer, one of pleasurable relief. The heat and glare on the open woodless hillside have been almost intolerable, and the contrast to these as you pass the archway of the gate is wonderful. You pass at once from glare to a sort of mysterious twilight. It is by comparison cool. But the sights that meet the eye as you advance along the street, ill-paved with round cobble-stones, are not idyllic ; and still less are the odours that assail another much maltreated sense ambrosial. Of sound, if the sun be yet two hours or so above the horizon, very little meets the ear. It is the most reposeful hour of siesta at Campomagro. And despite the disagreeables that assail sundry of your senses, you can hardly wonder that the inhabitants move as little beyond their walls

during the mid hours of the day as the people of a northern city do during the mid hours of the night. So far as the lying down together of pigs and children is concerned, the millennium seems to have arrived in Campomagro. Around some of the doors or in the embouchure of lanes, compared to the dismal obscurity of which the twilight of the main street is bright day, groups of both species may be seen fraternally wallowing in the reeking mud together, the one species of animal almost as naked as the other. As you advance into the interior of the place, however, a gradual but small improvement in the architectural features of it becomes visible. Gloomy, forbidding, jail-like looking houses of cut stone, almost black with age, and many of them with an escutcheon cut in stone over the door, alternate with half-dilapidated tenements of a construction less formed for duration. At last you see light ahead, almost as one does when emerging from a railway tunnel, and you find yourself in the principal piazza of the city. One side of this is occupied by the west front of the cathedral and the residence of the bishop standing beside it. At right angles to this, and facing the south, is the prefecture; and the rest of that side of the square is completed by a building in

which the legal business of the district is transacted, and by sundry other government offices. The side opposite to this, that from which you have arrived, is formed of some four or five of the bettermost houses of the city, and the remaining side, that opposite to the cathedral, is open to the country. This is the one grand and pleasing feature of the place. A parapet wall bounds the piazza on that side, an abrupt precipice falls immediately on the other side of it, and from this parapet the eye ranges over a wide district of valley and mountain for many and many a mile.

Such is the Marchese di Roccanuda's kingdom. There he lives from year's end to year's end, save when the monotony of his existence is broken by an official visit to Palermo. And there his wife, the marchesa, and his extremely pretty daughter, the Marchesina Rosina, live without any interruption to the monotony of their lives. The young marchese, the ex-Garibaldian, has obtained a commission in the Italian army, the dispensers of such blessings having been moved by much the same considerations as those which obtained a prefecture for his father.

The life at Campomagro can hardly be said to have been of a lively or exhilarating nature.

And it can hardly have been that the marchese and his family did not feel the change which had befallen them. Nevertheless, there was the consideration that things might have been worse, very much worse. In the first place, it is something—very much to men of the Roccanuda mould—to be “monarchs of all they survey”—to be the Tritons, however small the minnows. Then there was but very little to do, and that little was pretended to be done by his secretary. He lived in a large house, instead of in a garret in an off-street from the Toledo; and he was, what he had never before tasted the smallest savour of being, a great man. It can hardly be doubted that he regretted his morning walks in the Villa Reale, his afternoon drives in the Chiaja, his gossip in the royal antechambers, and such like occupations of the life to which he had been bred. But, on the other hand, his daily dinner was more plentiful and more assured. And though, in truth, he had in old times found the antechamber more amusing than he now found the presence-chamber, still it was something to know, while he dawdled sufficiently to make folks believe that he was laboriously busy with the affairs of the public, that others were

waiting to be admitted to his presence as he had himself once waited. I am inclined to think that the lady marchesa and the Marchesina Rosina, her pretty daughter, did not find life at the prefecture so dull as the Signor Prefetto did. Neither of these ladies could read or write, save with an amount of difficulty that rendered the doing either willingly or as an amusement out of the question. And perhaps it may seem at first sight that this would have rendered their lives all the duller, by cutting off from them so all-sufficient an employment. But I think such a notion reposes on a mistake. The less cultivated any human being is, the less sensible is he to the attacks of the demon of ennui. The intolerable void caused by the absence of all occupation for the mind is only felt by minds which have been accustomed to be occupied. The official revenues did not supply any very liberal sums for expenditure upon the ladies' toilettes, but they were better off in this respect than they had been before, while very much less was needed or expected from them. And this was a very great point; the excellence which ambition aims at in this matter being not positive, but strictly comparative. The marchesa and her daughter



were the most fashionably-dressed women in Campomagro. That is to say, they were held to be so by the inhabitants of that city. And the beauty of the position was, that had they thought fit to wear head-dresses made of fools-cap paper or skirts made of Turkey carpet, the same faith would have been unhesitatingly held. If to follow the fashion be good, surely to set it for others to follow must be much better. And the latter happiness was now the lot of the prefectess and her daughter. I fancy, also, that in the matter of society the ladies were better off than the prefect himself. There was a bishop, as has been mentioned, and there were the clergy of his cathedral. Now, it was not that there was any such difference of mental calibre between the marchese and the bishop or any of his clergy as made intercourse between them unamusing, while it did not act so in the case of the ladies. Nor was it that there was any lack of sympathy on matters of State or Church between the prefect and the clergy: the contrary was the case, as will presently be seen. But, somehow or other, it happens that the Catholic clergy like the society of the gentler sex better than they do that of the male members of their flocks, while



the ladies are able to take a pleasure in clerical society which men can rarely take; so the Marchesa and the charming Marchesina Rosina had social resources at their command which were of little or no avail to the marchese.

Of course, as soon as the appointment of the Marchese di Roccanuda to the prefecture of "that important city" of Campomagro in Monte was known, it was the signal for a terrible outcry on the part of all the opposition members in the Chamber and all the opposition newspapers throughout the kingdom. What! a known and notorious adherent of the late detested monarchy! a priest-ridden bigot, whose conscience was in the keeping of the priests! a member of the black party in disguise! a reactionist! a sworn enemy to the new order of things! Was it for this that we gave our blood? etc., etc., etc. But the ministry had pursued the same policy in so many other cases, and had been so often assailed by the same outcry, that their ears were used to it, and they let the storm rage till it had tired itself with the subject and turned to something else. It was not long, however, before circumstances gave the malcontents an opportunity of catching the new prefect, as it was thought, on the hip. It was

the festival of the Corpus Domini. Campomagro had from time immemorial celebrated this high religious festival by a grand procession of the Holy Sacrament round the town, a procession in which all the authorities, civil and military, used to take part, giving to the celebration an unequivocal air of governmental sanction, and at the same time proving, of course, the affectionate reverence of the State for Holy Mother Church. Upon this occasion the whole country-side was on the tiptoe of expectation to see what line the new prefect would take in the matter, the more so that the syndic, a landowner of the neighbourhood who had recently returned from the exile he had suffered under the former government, would, as all the Campomagro world well knew, take no part whatever in the celebration of the religious festival. This syndic was in fact in more ways than one a thorn in the side of the prefect. He had suffered first imprisonment and then exile for his political opinions under the Bourbon government—had then joined Garibaldi, and helped in kicking his old tyrant out of his kingdom. He was an old patrician, Conte Parana by name, a bachelor, a great hater of the priests, and not without influence

among a certain portion of the people of the district. Luckily for the marchesa, he had no wife or daughter, otherwise her reign might not have been so undisputed a one as it was in the absence of any rival potentate.

When the great day of the festival drew near, those who carefully watched such matters reported in the town that the bishop had been seen of late two or three times to enter or quit the prefecture at unusual hours—morning hours, when the Signor Prefetto was known to be in his study. The visits of the bishop at the prefecture were by no means rare, but they usually took place either in the afternoon or in the evening. And conclusions were drawn accordingly. One morning, about four or five days before the festival, the marchesa, returning from an early visit to the church, found the bishop's liveried footman lounging at the door of the prefecture, and the chaplain, who had attended him in his walk of a dozen yards across the piazza, sitting half asleep in the prefect's antechamber. So she knew that the ecclesiastical and civil authorities were in high conclave; and thinking that it might be as well for the good cause that she should make one of the council, she entered the sacred studio. Her

husband was sitting behind his official table brandishing a huge paper-knife in his hand, and the bishop, sitting opposite, exactly faced him, with his two elbows on the table, and his snuff-box held in both hands. The two men were much contrasted in appearance—the marchese tall, spare, dry-looking, with a thin weak face, an aquiline nose, and a forehead that retreated in a straight line from the root of his nose to the top of his bald pyramid-shaped head. The bishop was an oily, roundabout-looking man, with a handsome mouth, good dark eyes, and a broad, well-shaped forehead. His voice was soft, and, old courtier as the marchese was, the bishop was the courtlier-mannered man of the two.

“I thought,” says the lady, entering, “that matters had all been settled about the *festa*, for I suppose you are talking about that?”

“It is about the public force, my dear. The bishop knows my sentiments. Of course I shall be found in my proper place, both at mass in the church and in the procession through the town. But his Reverence is very anxious for the attendance of the public force.”

“Yes, I confess I *am* anxious on this point,” replies the bishop in a somewhat thick but soft

and insinuating voice, "because I know what effect these things produce upon the people, and I know what they expect. Believe me, Signor Marchese, our people here are attached to their old ways. I am sure the marchesa will agree with me."

"Why, Ippolito, what can you be thinking of? Of course the soldiers must go in the procession. *Misericordia!* Why, what is a procession without soldiers?" says the lady in a high-pitched, shrill voice.

"Quite true, my dear—quite true. But, you see, everything is so watched and called over the coals in these days. I am sure I don't know what we are coming to. There are some very godless men among the government at Turin; and, you see, I don't know how it would be taken," says the marchese, rubbing one hand slowly over the other as he speaks, and wishing devoutly, no doubt, that he could wash his hands of the matter altogether.

"I think," returns the bishop softly, "that when the nature and the habits of our population are taken into account, it would be considered a wise and prudent step not to alienate their feelings from the present government. I am not a political partisan: I speak only in the

interests of tranquillity and good order. Our mountaineers are a religious people, and I would not undertake to say that we might not have some trouble if any change in such respects led them to imagine that the new government was hostile to their religion. Believe me, I am speaking in the interest of the government."

"Why, Ippolito, of course the soldiers must go," his lady wife says once again.

And the soldiers do go. And that same evening a report is despatched to Turin by the syndic laying the circumstance before the minister, and lamenting the mischievous effect such a use of the public force was likely to produce on the minds of the people, and especially enlarging upon the enormity of the fact that the soldiers of a constitutional and liberal government were absolutely made to carry wax tapers in their hands. Almost by return of post this perfidious despatch comes back to Campomagro, enclosed to the prefect, with a request that he will report upon the matter referred to. The poor marchese's teeth chatter in his head as the minister's despatch falls from his hand. His mind had misgiven him that trouble would come of this unlucky procession; and what was to be done now? Evidently, the first thing to



be done was to go to his wife, partly in I-told-you-so triumph, but more in search of support and council.

The lady takes the matter very easily. "Ta, ta, ta!" says she; "it's a long arm that can reach from Turin to Campomagro. Send for the bishop: he'll make it all straight."

So the bishop is summoned to the prefecture, and comes smiling and calmly confident—a mood which does not seem to be in the smallest degree changed by a perusal of the ministerial despatch. "It is always a good thing," says the bishop, "to have an opportunity of saying a word for the truth and the good cause. The minister would have been wiser from his point of view to say nothing about the matter. We must answer his letter. Will you permit me, dear marchese, to draw up a sketch of a reply, your time is so precious and so fully occupied? I will bring it to you this evening."

That same evening, accordingly, the good bishop returns with a well-written letter to the minister for the prefect to copy. After warm expressions of his own attachment and devotion to the present order of things, the writer proceeds to say that, having deemed it his duty to make himself intimately acquainted with the



opinions, desires, and even the prejudices, of the people of the district confided to him, he had come to the opinion that evil rather than good would have resulted from a too brusque and sudden opposition to all their habits and wishes in the matter of the procession ; that they were not in general ill disposed toward the present government of his Majesty, but that their attachment to their clergy and their religion is the strongest passion known to them ; and that, though far from despairing of success in his great object of gradually building up in the popular mind an equally ardent affection for their new country, and as lofty a conception of their duties toward their country as they now have of their duties towards their Church, he yet judged it impolitic to force upon them any measures which might in their eye seem to place the two in opposition ; and indeed should not feel himself justified in attempting to govern the city and district of Campomagro if it were judged desirable to insist on a line of conduct that would have such an effect.

The bishop keeps nodding his head in time to the cadences of his own sentences with much complacency as the prefect reads the letter ; and the marchesa exclaims at the end of it, "The

holy man! how beautifully he does it! It is just as if it was preached from the pulpit."

But the prefect's face falls when he comes to the last sentence: "But, my dear friend, surely you know as well as I do that—that it would not suit me, in short, to give up the prefecture. If I fly in the face of the minister——"

"Make your mind perfectly easy, my dear friend," returns his reverend Mentor: "trust me, the minister has more cause to be afraid of us than we have to be afraid of him. And we know our friends, we others. You send His Excellency that letter: trust me, you will be all right enough."

So the letter is sent; the minister shrugs his shoulders as he tosses it into a pigeon hole; and a day or two later, in reply to a question from a deputy on the "Left," quotes the bishop's words about "building up an ardent affection for their new country," and assures the Chamber that the country has not a more zealous or patriotic official than the Marchese di Roccanuda.

In point of fact, there is a larger element of truth in the statements which monsignore the bishop put into the prefect's mouth with reference to the disposition of the population of those

hills than many observers of Italian affairs from a distance—and, as one may say, from the outside—would perhaps have supposed. The country generally is “liberal,” radical even, with a tendency toward the redder shades of that creed. But such opinions can only be said to be held, in such consistent fashion as gives them any right to be called opinions, by what is in fact a small minority of the entire people. They are held by the people who make most noise, who write and read newspapers, who are, as Carlyle says, articulate, and have the capacity to say what they feel and mean and wish. But when it is remembered that in the district of Campomagro the people who can neither read nor write are in number about eight-five per cent. of the population, it will be seen that the “inarticulate” men must count for something, if only by sheer dead weight. These men and women, so little removed in the scale of being from the cattle they tend, for the most part hate the late Bourbon government because it *was* a government, and as such an enemy, as much as a wolf is a lamb’s enemy, and because they were miserable and wretched under it. They have a certain amount of perception that this hated government and the priests rowed in the same

boat ; and the priests have accordingly suffered in their estimation on account of the mutual support which State and Church lent each other. But they do not see—there has happened nothing to enable them to see—any reason why there should be any necessary incompatibility or antithesis between the liberalism which promises to cure the evils they suffered from and the religion which gave them the few good things they ever knew—rest, holidays, amusement, shows. So that there is some truth in the bishop's representation of the state of the popular mind as regarded the Corpus Domini procession. Nor would it be impossible to show some grounds for believing that such a man as the Marchese di Roccanuda, with his antecedents, his connections, his friendships and his ideas, might be more likely to keep things quiet, *in statu quo*, than an administrator from the North, with the views and ideas of a very different school. But is keeping things as they are what is needed? What about the future? What about the recovery of the magnificent island, once the garden and the granary of Italy, from the condition of all but absolute barbarism to which centuries of every species of bad government have brought it? What about the civilization of

those savage descendants of one of the once most highly civilized races in Europe? For all these purposes the Roccanuda maxims of government are worth considerably less than nothing. And for the eradication of the darker evils, schemes for the getting rid of which are now setting the statesmen of Italy by the ears? Prefects of the Roccanuda stamp will achieve nothing in this direction. It is not from any such that the reports have proceeded which have in some degree opened the eyes of Italy and of the outer world to the almost incredible state of chronic lawlessness prevailing in that ruined country. No doubt the marchese, prefect of the mountain-district of Campomagro, could have told many a tale, that would seem wholly incredible to the administrators of the law in any other country on the face of the globe. But the marchese is a cautious man, interested above all else in the perfect preservation of his own skin, not apt by his training from his youth upward to feel that moral shock which the supremacy of wrong over right produces in less thick-skinned moral natures, and governed mainly by the idea that since it must necessarily cause a great deal of trouble to change anything, it is always wisest to leave it as it is.

Fortunately, there are magistrates and administrators of a different class from our marchese in Sicily. Some of these have spoken out in tones which have arrested the attention of all Europe. And on a future occasion perhaps I may endeavour to represent to my readers some picture of a state of things not paralleled, I think, in any hitherto known community.





THE RECORDS OF  
THE VENETIAN INQUISITION.



# THE RECORDS OF THE VENETIAN INQUISITION.

## CHAPTER I.

ON entering Venice for the first time, notwithstanding the brightness of the strange beauty, so unlike anything else in all the world, which is around the visitor on all sides, there are probably few persons part of the excitement of whose imaginations upon the occasion is not due to romantically terrible notions of the ways and dealings of the old Venetian Government. Even as the bright laughing gondola-life skims over the surface of dark voiceless waters, whose depths seem to cover the secrets of so many generations, so to the reader of that which is generally given to the world as Venetian history does the brilliant and splendid story

of the old Republic seem to overlies mysterious and unfathomable depths of terror, tyranny, and secret deeds of relentless and resistless power. When the stranger turns his first eager steps to the Ducal Palace—that grandest expression in stone of national power and magnificence that the world has ever yet seen—when he passes awe-struck up the Giant Stair, and paces those exquisitely beautiful corridors, while

“A thousand years their dusky wings expand  
Around him,”

his eyes and thoughts may first be turned to all the world of art in its highest expressions, which lies on every side, and to the consummate beauty of every kind that invites his gaze. But, if he have any tincture of historical lore, and any capacity of imagination in him, the liveliest thrill of excited interest will be felt when he passes through the low-browed little door in the great gallery on the first floor, which gives him admittance to the dark staircases that lead to the terrible “Pozzi;” or when, from the little room on the highest floor of the Palace in which the awful “Three” held their sittings, he climbs the narrow stair by which the condemned reached the yet more dreadful prisons of the “Piombi.”

Who has not read the abounding stories divulged to all people in all lands by poets in verse and poets in prose, and stamped in many cases by the hall-mark of genius, which have prepared the mind for that pleasurable thrill of excitement and interest? And are there not still extant, palpable to touch and evident to sight, the material proofs of the genuineness of such narratives—proofs of a nature eminently calculated to enhance to the utmost, by their actual presence to the senses, the vividness of the thrill? There gapes the awful “Lion’s mouth.” You may actually drop into it, with your own fingers, if you please, an anonymous denunciation of any man or any thing, pretending to glance suspiciously around, even as did the last person before you who used it for its terrible purposes. Only your billet will lie there innoxious till the unmoved dust consume it. There is still that fearful seat of stone hard by the secret exit of the “Pozzi” to the discreet and silent canal, on which the victim to be strangled was placed for execution. There, deep among the foundations of the colossal walls which support far above the noble halls, glorious with all the majesty and the splendour of the gorgeous Republic, are those ever silent,



hopeless "Pozzi" themselves, exactly in the state in which they were left by their latest prisoner. There can hardly be an imagination so dull as not to be powerfully excited by these objects and places, and scarcely a visitor to them so unread as to be unprepared for the excitement by all that has been written of the terrible tribunal at whose word these awful prisons opened and closed their doors.

And now that the terrible "Three" exist no more, and that those fearful prison-doors open at the beck of any hand that has a franc in it, it cannot be denied that the thrill produced in the visitor is a not disagreeable sensation, and that the romance of the thing is one of the pleasures of a visit to the ancient Queen of the Adriatic. It may well be, therefore, that to some persons a sober and accurately historical account of the famed tribunal and its doings, which must have the effect of dissipating some portion of the romance and all the mystery that has hitherto belonged to the subject, may not be welcome. Nevertheless, there is no spot so sacred to mystery and bugaboo, that the curious but calm eye of history will not sooner or later peer into it; and it is as well that the simple truth should be told and known, even

respecting the dread “Three” of the Venetian Inquisition.

A *portion* of the romance which hangs about the subject will have to be dissipated ; not all, by any means. If the tribunal of the Inquisition of Venice was believed by its contemporaries, and has ever since been believed, to be something much more terrible and dangerous than it really was, it was not only the fault of that institution that such was the case—it was their wish and express purpose that it should be so. It was an essential and carefully practised part of their system to envelop their operations in mystery. Their object was to be supposed to be ubiquitous and omniscient. And they struck, when they did strike, in a manner which was calculated to give the impression of an unseen but ever-present and resistless hand. In a word, it was their policy to accomplish their objects as much by operating on the imaginations of the citizens as by the exercise of power over their persons. No account was ever rendered to any one of any of their doings, and no record was kept of them, save in their own absolutely secret and jealously guarded archives.

From these circumstances it naturally and

necessarily resulted that mere rumour and fiction, more or less mingled with fact, took the place of history in all that concerned the doings of the dreaded "Three." But such rumours and tales were consolidated into the semblance of history, and these fictions were, more or less wittingly and of set purpose, presented to the world as such by the Frenchman, Daru, whose *History of Venice* was for many years the principal source of the historical notions commonly current in Europe upon the subject. The Comte Pierre Ant. Noel Bruno Daru published, in 1819, his *History of Venice*, in seven octavo volumes; and it quickly assumed the position of *the* History of Venice, from which the world of general readers gathered their knowledge of Venetian story. It was systematically written with a view to discredit and blacken the old Government of the Republic. And most readers are now aware what is to be expected from a French writer under such circumstances! Justice has long since been done by more than one competent hand on Comte Daru's book. But many of the tales and notions, which first derived their birth from it, still circulate in popular guide-books and the like, and in the minds of those not more

accurately informed than the general tourist can be expected to be.

Moreover, it is only quite recently that it has been possible to obtain the information which alone could serve as a basis for a true and authentic story of the practices and doings of the Venetian Inquisition. It has been said that the only record of these was kept with all secrecy by the tribunal itself. Absolutely nothing could or can be known with certainty of the maxims, procedure, and *modus operandi* of the Inquisition, without access to these archives. And it is only quite recently, as I have said, that such access has been possible.

Among the almost incredibly enormous masses of records of the Republic, which are preserved in the vast halls of the "Frari," there are eighteen huge folio volumes, bound in parchment, and lettered *Annotations of the Inquisitors of State*. These volumes contain the whole of the records of that institution. Years ago they were removed, together with large masses of other documents, to Vienna. There no person was permitted to have access to them; not, in all probability, in consequence of any desire on the part of the Austrians to keep the secrets of the Venetian Inquisitors, but probably because

the masses of papers brought away were allowed to remain unexamined and unarranged in the cases in which they had been brought across the Alps. But in 1868, by virtue of a clause in the treaty of peace, signed between Austria and Italy in 1866, these volumes, together with very many other documents, were restored to Italy, and replaced in their old resting-place at the "Frari," where they are now freely at the disposition of the studious. The results of this accessibility will shortly be laid before historical students in two works: one by the Cavaliere Armando Baschet, who will give the fruit of his diligent examination of all the recorded processes, as well as of the correspondence of the Inquisitors with their agents; and the other by Signor Giulio Crivellari, who has nearly ready a work entitled *The Criminal Law of Venice*.

But, in the meantime, Signor Augusto Bazzoni has published a brief account of these *Annotations* in the *Archivio Storico Italiano*, by the help of which we propose to give English readers a somewhat more accurate account of the Venetian Inquisition, and of its doings, than has hitherto been offered to them.

In the first place, it may be necessary to

mention that the Venetian Inquisition had nothing specially to do with religious matters. It was a *State* and not a Church Inquisition. The special object of the tribunal was originally to discover, to prevent, and to punish the traitorous revelation of the State secrets of the Republic to foreigners. This was an evil which the government had frequently reason to deplore, and to contend against. And Commissions of Inquisition, issued for that purpose, are mentioned occasionally from a time shortly subsequent to the establishment of the "Council of Ten." But no such tribunal existed as a permanent institution till the 20th of September, 1539, when the "Council of Ten" determined on appointing from among its own members a committee of "Three," whose special duty it should be to discover and to punish the betrayers of State secrets. The special cause which at that particular time moved the "Ten" to take this step was the discovery that five traitors, three of whom were put to death for their crime, had, in the year 1538, given information to the Mussulman of the designs of the Republic. The name of "Inquisitors of State" was not, however, given them till towards the end of the sixteenth century, at which time their attri-



butions and functions were largely increased; and it became their duty to take cognizance of anything whatever that threatened either the external or internal well-being of the State. At the period above mentioned it had become the practice to select two of the Inquisitors from the body of the "Ten," and one from the Ducal Council. The two former were styled "the black Inquisitors," from the colour of the gowns they wore; and the latter, who sat always between the other two, and wore a scarlet gown, was known as "the red Inquisitor." And Signor Bazzoni remarks that the grim contrast of these costumes, and the names to which they gave rise, contributed no little to the terror with which the tribunal was regarded by the Venetian populace.

The proceedings of the Inquisition were conducted according to no rules,\* save such as might in some degree grow out of the habits of their own court; were always wrapped in profound mystery; were entirely secret, both as regarded process and sentence; and were inappealable! If any citizen of any rank of life disappeared, and any inquiry were made

\* And those which Daru affects to give in his unvarnished book are mere fabrications and inventions.



respecting him or her by the ordinary officers of justice, it was a fully sufficient answer to all such questions to whisper with bated breath that the individual in question had been arrested by the officer—the “fante,” as he was called—of the “Three!”

It is indeed not surprising that such a tribunal should have been looked upon with terror. And Signor Bazzoni declares that he shuddered as he opened those dread registers, which were to reveal the arbitrary sentences, the despotic proceedings, the poisonings, the executions carried out in the silence of the prison, the mysterious disappearances, of which the terrible “Three” had been the authors. And great was his surprise in discovering a course of procedure tolerably regular; a decided leaning to mildness and moderation in the punishments; a method of treating the guilty severe indeed, but not cruel; a disposition to pardon, except in cases of reconviction for the same offence; and a desire to prevent crimes rather than to punish them, if it were possible. He found, he tells us, but few cases of capital punishment, and as far as his investigations went, but one of death inflicted by poison, and one other in which the tribunal had wished and

endeavoured, but had failed to put to death by that means, a culprit who was beyond their reach. Only, says Signor Bazzoni, in matters of state were the Inquisitors more severe than modern notions might deem justifiable; as when they put to death Alberti, the Secretary of the Republic, for falsifying the Letters Ducal.

It is probable that all that Signor Bazzoni states here is strictly true and accurate. But an Englishman would think that all that is here said would go very little way towards removing the objections he would feel to the existence of such a tribunal. In the first place, there is nothing whatever to assure the inquirer that these *Annotations* contain a faithful record of *all* the cases dealt with by the Inquisitors. No sort of control whatsoever existed. Nobody had cognizance of the record save the Three themselves, and their secretary, who became, it would seem, in process of time the most terribly powerful member of the court. On the other hand, a cruel severity in dealing with criminals is not the evil of which one would especially expect to find the tribunal to have been guilty. In the case of ordinary crime one would wish to know rather what was the nature of the evidence on which a criminal was found guilty.

But it is not to the dealings of the court with ordinary crime at all that an Englishman's suspicions would more especially point. Here are four men—the “Three” and their secretary—who have wholly irresponsible power over the lives and persons of all the citizens of Venice; who can put their hand on any man or any woman in the midst of their family and of their daily life, and can cause them to disappear out of it, and never be heard of again. Is it likely that such a power should never have been exercised throughout the long series of years during which it existed, for purposes which had no connection with the repressing of crime? If it was exercised for any such nameless purposes, is it certain that we should find the record of such cases in the book of these *Annotations*? There seems, however, to have existed one, and only one circumstance, in connection with the absolute power wielded by the Inquisitor, which may have served as a partial protection against altogether arbitrary violence. It was absolutely necessary that every sentence passed against any person brought before the tribunal should be concurred in by all the three judges. If there were any difference of opinion between them, the matter had to be referred to the

“Council of Ten.” Signor Bazzoni does not mention having met with the record of any case in which that step had to be resorted to. And after all, in so small a body as the Inquisitors were, the “ca’ me ca’ thee” principle is too sure to be in operation for this circumstance to have afforded any very valid protection against the possibility of such irresponsible power being used for the purposes of private hatred, or interest, or convenience.

The eighteen volumes of records, or *Annotazioni*, as they are styled, which have been spoken of, contain the entire history of the tribunal for somewhat more than a century and a half. The first entry in them is dated in January, 1643, and the last 6th March, 1797, which was just two months and ten days before the troops of France entered Venice “to murder,” as Signor Bazzoni says, “a Republic which had lived for fourteen centuries.” The first volume of the series extends from 1643 to 1651. In this the entries are exceedingly brief and informal, merely mentioning the nature of each case, without even stating the result of it, as whether the person inculpated was convicted or otherwise, or what punishment was awarded. But the second volume begins with the insertion of a new regu-

lation enacted by the Inquisitors, providing that the records should be kept in a more orderly and full manner. And thenceforward the whole history of each case is satisfactorily given, together with the means which had been adopted by the tribunal for the detection of the guilt of the accused.

This latter portion of the record, as may easily be imagined, is in many instances the most curious and interesting part of the document. The principal means by which the Inquisitors performed the functions entrusted to them was the employment of a vast number of "confidants"—*confidenti*, persons whose occupation would, as Signor Bazzoni remarks, at the present day cause them to be called *spies*. It was the object of the Inquisition to have these confidants in every class of society, among noble men and noble ladies, among clergy and among monks and nuns, among servants of families, and the lowest as well as the highest classes of the body social. The persons thus employed by the tribunal received a regular stipend; and we find cases in which they were suddenly turned adrift because they did nothing, or because the communications made by them to their employers were frivolous and useless. There are also cases

on record in which these confidential agents were detected in abusing the confidence of the tribunal by wittingly false information; and this was a delinquency which called forth all the severity of the "Three."

It is a satisfactory and a curious proof of the progressive improvement in the general tone of moral sentiment and manners, that during the later period of its existence the tribunal experienced a constantly increasing difficulty in finding a sufficient supply of suitable persons to undertake the office of confidant to the Inquisition. In a report made to his superiors by the secretary on the 1st of October, 1692, that functionary laments the great deficiency of proper agents, more especially in the upper classes of society, which had reached such a pitch that among the nobles there remained to the tribunal only one single person, "*il nobil uomo Girolamo M. Barossi.*" We are not aware whether there are sons or grandsons of this excellent nobleman still living at Venice; but if there are, they will hardly thank Signor Bazzoni for the researches which have revealed a fact which the noble Girolamo assuredly thought would never be known on this side of the day of judgment!

Although the Inquisitors trusted almost



wholly to their confidants for the information necessary to them in the discharge of their functions, they did not by any means refuse to receive and listen to any person whatever, who came to them with any communication. And the following case, very considerably abridged from the report of it in the *Annotations*, will give an instance of their practice in this respect, as well as furnish some illustrations of their modes of procedure in other respects. The record is dated the 19th June, 1763.

An important robbery of cash and precious stones to a large amount had been committed in the house of the Ambassador of Spain. And the ordinary police authorities had, despite their utmost efforts, utterly failed in accomplishing anything towards either the recovery of the property or the discovery of the thief. In these circumstances the Ambassador petitioned the Inquisitors, to see whether they could effect what had been found utterly beyond the power of the other Magistracies. The Inquisitors took the matter in hand. And very shortly after they had done so, they received the visit of a nun, who, speaking from beneath her cowl, said that there was a person who would undertake to reveal to the tribunal the spot



where all the stolen property would be found buried, on three conditions. 1st. That the reward of an hundred zequins, promised by the Spanish Ambassador, should be paid to the person who should point to the property. 2nd. That the name of the person who should give the information should be kept inviolably secret. 3rd. That the person in whose house the property should be found should have a free pardon. These conditions were accepted; and apparently no other guarantee for the observance of them, beyond the simple word of the Inquisitors, was required. Thereupon an individual came forward, who privately indicated to an officer of the "Three" a certain spot in the floor of the shop of a blacksmith, which was within the limits of the exemption from jurisdiction enjoyed by the palace of the Spanish Ambassador himself. All the residences of the ambassadors and other ministers of foreign governments enjoyed in those days, as is well known, this infinitely mischievous and continually abused right of exemption from the visits and all the operations of the civil and criminal tribunals of the country. But, although this was a perfectly recognized and undisputed fact, it very specially suited the

views of the "Three" to have an opportunity of acting before the eyes of the populace in a manner which should appear to show that neither this privilege nor anything else could be an impediment to the omnipotent and ubiquitous action of their dread power. So the secretary of the tribunal went privately to the Ambassador and told him that all his property would be restored to him by the action of the Inquisition, upon condition that he would waive all right or question of the exemption of his own dwelling from their operations. This having been arranged, the tribunal paused a little while. And then suddenly one day their "fante," in his well-known costume, accompanied by the "capitano grande," or chief officer of the executive, with forty men, marched straight to the spot, and pointing, said to his men, "Dig there!" Of course the treasure was found, to the infinite stupor and admiration of the crowd, who were more than ever convinced of the omnipotent power and omniscience of the terrible "Three!" The blacksmith, however, was arrested and carried before the Inquisitors. He pleaded the pardon bargained for, and his plea was allowed. But, said his judges, though you are pardoned for the crime of having con-

cealed this stolen property in your dwelling, there is no pardon for him who refuses to answer to the utmost of his knowledge the questions put to him by the Inquisition. And we now require of you the name of the thief who abstracted the property from the Ambassador's house. The blacksmith replied that nothing could be further from him than the absurd idea of concealing anything from the "Three;" and he forthwith gave them all the details of the robbery, in such sort as to leave no possible doubt of the truth of his assertion, that he himself was the sole perpetrator of it! And thereupon, in accordance with their pledged word, he was at once liberated. The Ambassador, however, seeing the blacksmith thus arrested and almost immediately set at liberty again, made application to the secretary of the "Three," stating, "in very resolute terms" his determination to know who the thief was, as he was thus left with the fear that the guilty person might have been one of his own household. And certainly the demand was not an unreasonable one. But the only reply he got from the "Three" was, that the Inquisition never rendered, and never would render, any account whatever of its doings to any, human

being; that he might rest assured that what had been done was just and right; that he would be duly warned if his security in any way required it; but that he would never know anything more as to the person who had robbed him, or the facts which had taken place.

Venice, during the whole period of her existence as an independent Republic, was a great place for diplomacy. The ambassadors which the Queen of the Adriatic sent into all countries were, for the most part, masters in their profession, as their recently published *Relazioni* abundantly testify; and all the States in Europe maintained diplomatic agents of higher or lower rank in Venice. And secrecy was supposed by all these diplomatists to be the very *sine quâ non* and mainspring of their craft. To hide, and to discover; to deceive and to avoid being deceived; to know something which rivals had not found out; to spin elaborate webs for the entanglement of this or the other adversary, and the veiling of this or that carefully dissembled purpose: this was the game at which all the diplomatists in Europe were constantly playing. And Venice, which, at least in her later days, was a member of the European family, necessarily constrained to

trust for the holding of its own more to the adroitness of its policy than to the force of its arms, was more than ordinarily jealous of the secrets of its diplomacy, and more vehemently bent than the rest on knowing the hidden purposes of others, while keeping its own impenetrably in the dark. Nevertheless, from the constitution of the Republic, it inevitably came to pass that the State secrets of Venice were known to a larger number of her citizens than was generally the case in the monarchies which were her contemporaries. Hence it came to pass that the safe keeping of such secrets was, especially during the latter centuries of the Republic's existence, one of the most eagerly and carefully pursued objects of the State's solicitude. At the same time it was unfortunately found that the difficulties of attaining this object became greater as time went on. The nobles, whose position in the Republic made them members of the governing body, and depositaries of State secrets, had been all, and always in the flourishing days of Venice, men whose vast wealth, constantly poured in from argosies on every sea, was more than equal to the lavish expenditure necessitated by a splendour of living, which at all times specially

characterized Venice, and distinguished her from her sister—particularly from the Tuscan—Republics. But in the latter times of Venice this was no longer the case. The habitudes of magnificence and lavish expenditure remained, but the sources of the wealth, which was needed for the supply of them, had become dried up. Hence it came to pass that there were numbers of men of high rank and great name who were in distressed and embarrassed circumstances, who were constantly on the look-out for some possible means of eking out incomes no longer sufficient for the calls upon them. And State secrets in those days were very merchantable articles, and bidders for them were at hand ready to compete with each other for purchase of them. Under these circumstances it became a matter of ceaseless anxiety to the Government, and an important part of the duty of the Inquisitors, to make all dealing in such articles impossible. And laws which, to our notions, appear to be of almost incredibly arbitrary severity, were enacted to provide against the evil; and the execution of them was entrusted wholly to the tribunal of the Inquisition.

Among these laws was one which made it



illegal for any Venetian man of patrician rank to visit at the house of any Minister of a foreign Power, or to receive any such Minister in his house, or even to consort with him or any members of his family in any way! And one great part of the business of the “Three” consisted, especially in the later days of the Republic, in watching and spying with sleepless vigilance to prevent the contravention of an ordinance so difficult to be enforced. One can understand that, however desirable a *séjour* at Venice may have been in other respects, such a law as this, together with the means and provisions necessary for enforcing of it, must have had the effect of making the position of the foreign Ministers accredited to the Republic not a pleasant one in a social point of view.

Here are one or two instances of the steps taken by the tribunal for attaining the above-mentioned object:—

On the 18th January, 1676, the Baron de Passis received a summons to present himself before the Inquisitors. The baron was not by birth a Venetian subject; but he resided in Venice, and was connected by ties of relationship with several noble families. Now, it seems that there were two doors of communication

between the house inhabited by him and the dwelling adjoining it, which latter was occasionally frequented by the Spanish Ambassador. The baron was warned that, Venetian or not, he must rigorously abstain from all communication whatever with any foreign Minister, and must *immediately wall up* the doors of communication above mentioned; in all which respects he promised accurate obedience.

On the 11th May, 1707, the noble Alvise Barbaro was called before the "Three." Ignorant that he had offended in any way, he obeyed the terrible intimation with much surprise and no little alarm. The matter was this. The Duchess of Bavaria was then residing at Venice, and this young nobleman had been seen on more than one occasion walking up and down before the palace inhabited by her. But this surely contravened no law. And therefore he was not punished, but only warned. He ought to have known the duty of a Venetian noble better. The palace of the duchess was frequented by sundry of the foreign Ministers, and other foreigners of high rank. Let him take care for the future to give no ground for suspicion that any acquaintanceship existed between him and people of that sort.

And so the young man is allowed to retire. A very short time elapses, however, before he is again brought before the tribunal, and is this time walked off to a solitary prison under the "Piombi!" What was his fault? He had never entered the palace of the Duchess of Bavaria, or even repeated those walkings before it, which had been objected to. Could he deny that he had been in conversation with certain of the maids of the duchess? or that he had had an interview with the duchess herself at the nunnery of the Capuchins? So, after four and twenty hours under the "Piombi," he was then sent in the custody of the "fanti" of the tribunal to Brescia, with a letter to the captain of the fortress there, directing him to keep Alvise Barbaro a close prisoner till further orders. And he seems to have been detained there and in other fortresses of the Republic for several years. Now, in this case, as Signor Bazzoni remarks, there can be little doubt that it was a love intrigue which led the unlucky Alvise to dare the consequences of disobeying the formidable "Three." But let what may have been the motive, it was to the tribunal a matter of first-rate importance to secure at all hazards implicit obedience to their commands.

On the 9th January, 1764, the patrician Andrea Memmo went spontaneously to the secretary of the Inquisition and confessed to him that the wife of the Minister of the Emperor of Austria had offered him her good offices in the affair of "the Mantuan Post-office;" that subsequently she had sent him a letter by an unknown hand, to which he had replied by the same means. He handed to the Inquisitors a copy of the lady's letter, not being able to furnish them with the original, inasmuch as he had been required to send it back to her. Also he laid before them a copy of the answer he had sent back. The tribunal at once declared that the matter was of extreme gravity in every point of view, and informed the culprit that, very fortunately for him, his spontaneous confession had, as it happened, reached them a few hours previously to *information of the whole matter which had come into their hands from other sources*. It was pointed out to the offender that he had been guilty of a very grave dereliction of duty in speaking even to the wife of an ambassador on a public matter, without at once giving information of the circumstance to the tribunal. To receive and read a letter was even more heinous; and, worst of all, the

answering it. Nevertheless the "Three," taking into consideration the circumstance that any strong step (*passo risoluto*) on their part *might lead to unpleasant consequences as regarded the Ambassador*, and at the same time willing to give the culprit the benefit of his spontaneous confession, contented themselves with administering a serious lecture on the heinousness of the offence, and strictly forbidding him ever to come near the lady in question or any of her family, even in church, or on occasions of public festivals. The tribunal would have its never-sleeping eye on him, and the slightest deviation from its commands would be followed by the severest castigation.

The cases which have been here mentioned would alone suffice to show that all that the popular guide-books and histories say as to the period since which the prisons of the Inquisition have been disused is incorrect. It is singular that such writers as Sagredo (*Venezia e le sue Lagune*) and Romanin (*Storia documentata di Venezia*) should fall into the error of asserting that the "Pozzi" were never used in the last century of the Republic, or, as some even assert, after the Interdict of Paul V. A glance at the *Annotations* now brought to light

suffices to show the error of all such statements. But, as Signor Bazzoni observes, the extreme secrecy and mystery with which the tribunal surrounded their proceedings may account for the mistakes of the older writers, while those of the moderns must be attributed to the undoubting trust with which they copied their predecessors. It is needless to refer to the many passages of the *Annotations* which would show the above statements to be erroneous: for the following return of the prisoners then in confinement, taken from the *Annotations* for 1775, settles the question. There were then imprisoned—

In the “Piombi” one prisoner.

In the “Pozzi” four prisoners.

In certain prisons called the “Camerotti delle quattro,” thirty-three prisoners.

In the prisons on *terrâ firma*, five prisoners.

In the galleys, fourteen prisoners.

It can scarcely be necessary to describe to anybody the “Piombi” and the “Pozzi.” Who has not visited them? Signor Bazzoni states that his study of the records of the Inquisition has not enabled him to discover what considerations guided the Inquisitors in deciding to which of these celebrated prisons each convict



should be sent. He conjectures that the most troublesome and violent may probably have been consigned to the "Pozzi." Doubtless it has appeared to most of those who have visited these famous places of punishment, that the "Pozzi" were by far the most terrible. To the imagination they are so certainly. The very imperfect light, the idea of the locality, the utter silence, with the exception of the dull, melancholy, and monotonous clapping of the waters of the canal against the walls, may seem far worse to the imagination than the abundant daylight of the "Piombi." In either case the prisoner's cell consisted of a very small chamber, entirely of massive and thoroughly dry wood. But no one, who is not well acquainted with the effect of an Italian sun beating on a roof, when there is no sufficient space between it and the chamber in which one is to live, can realize to himself what the effect of living under those "Piombi" in summer must have been. On the other hand, there are three or four cases of escape from the "Piombi" on record; but there is, I believe, no recorded instance of any prisoner having escaped from the horrible *bolgia* of those "Pozzi."

The punishments awarded by the Inquisitors

of Venice were : death inflicted secretly in the prison ; imprisonment either in the “ Piombi,” the “ Pozzi,” or the less terrible prisons called the “ Camerotti ;” condemnation to the galleys for life or for a term of years ; confinement to the offender’s own house in Venice, or more frequently to his country residence ; and, lastly, exile from the city of Venice, or from the entire territory of the Republic, either for life or for a term of years. The systematic secrecy and mystery in which the Inquisition sedulously involved all its proceedings gave rise to the popularly received opinion that its condemnations were pronounced not only arbitrarily, but with the summary suddenness of a thunder-clap ; and that they were of the most terrible description, dealing habitually with torture and poison. Arbitrary its method of proceeding assuredly was, as has been sufficiently explained. Sudden or reckless it certainly was not ; and no length of inquiry was too great for the investigating patience of the tribunal, though the result was often made purposely to appear sudden to the offender. No evidence is to be found in the whole series of the *Annotations* that torture was ever practised by the Inquisition. With regard to the use of poison there are a few sufficiently curious entries.

Under the date 30th May, 1643, there is a note of the secretary, recording that one Pasin Pasini brought specimens of various poisons, which he offered to the Inquisitors with a view to their use among the hostile troops with whom the forces of the Republic were then engaged. It does not seem that his offer was rejected; yet neither does it appear that the scheme was carried into effect. For the secretary notes that subsequently all these poisons were by him collected together and placed "in the ordinary cupboard of their Eminences the Inquisitors."

In June, 1646, the Governor of Dalmatia sent to the Inquisitors to ask them to furnish him with poison for the purpose of poisoning the wells for the destruction of the Turks. The Inquisitors, as the record declares, sent him a thousand pounds of arsenic for this purpose. And it is declared that the poison reached the Governor's hands duly. But whether it was used or no, there is no record to show.

More than a hundred years later, under the date of December 17, 1755, the secretary inserts in the records the following note:—

"Notice having been drawn to the fact that the poisonous substances kept for the service of

the tribunal were scattered about among the presses of papers, so as to cause a danger of accident; and, moreover, that many of these substances have become bad by lapse of time; and further, that with regard to many of them, neither the nature of them nor the proper dose is now known: Therefore their Eminences, minded to regularize so delicate a matter in such sort as is needful for the service of the tribunal and for safety, have ordered all things of this kind to be kept in a separate box, with a book in it, that shall explain the nature and the proper dose of every article, and which shall be thus registered for the enlightenment of their successors.

(Signed) “ANDREA DA SEZZE,”  
 “FRANCISCO BALBO,” } “*Inquisitors of*  
 “PIERO BARBARIGO,” } *State.*”

Is not the picture suggested by this entry a strange and curious one? Think of the packets and bottles of various kinds of poison lying about among the papers in the room of the Palazzo Ducale, occupied by the Inquisitors till it had been forgotten what they were, and all about them! It would, at all events, seem clear that they were not often used. Still the “Three” are far from any idea of abandoning

the use of such things. They put them all into a box by themselves, with a pharmacopœia that shall duly instruct their successors in the use of these agents on occasion arising. There is a sort of *naïveté* about the whole entry which is very surprising.

A few years after this, it would seem that recourse was had to the newly arranged poison-box, on an occasion which is the last instance in which the use of poison is mentioned in the *Annotations*. An entry, dated September 26, 1768, records that information had recently reached the Inquisitors that a [strange and unknown personage had made his appearance in Dalmatia and Albania, who announced himself as a lawgiver both in politics and religion—called himself Peter the Third, Czar of Muscovy—and, in short, stirred up the minds of the people, got a party of adherents around him, and was giving rise to disturbances. Thereupon the Inquisitors sent the most stringent orders—“*le più robusti commissioni*”—to the Governor of Dalmatia to take immediate steps to ensure that this dangerous impostor should be removed out of the world—“*tolto dal mondo*”—in the most cautious manner possible, and by the most hidden and secret means that could be devised.

The governor, however, despite the "robustness" of these orders, failed to find any means of getting rid of the obnoxious impostor. Whereupon the Inquisitors deliver a bottle of poison to one Count Zorzi Cadich Cornetta, who undertook to proceed to Dalmatia and accomplish the desired result. Cornetta, however, succeeded no better than the governor, and returning to Venice, gave back the bottle he had received to the "Three." And that is the last mention of poison that occurs in the record.

Most of the cases of condemnation to death appear to have been occasioned by ordinary crimes of a nature that would have been similarly visited by the criminal code of any contemporary nation. In some cases, indeed, the Inquisition seems to have been specially lenient, since we meet with cases of wilful murder punished by imprisonment for twenty years. But there is one case which so curiously illustrates the maxims of Venetian State policy, and gives so singular an idea of the nature of the circumstances which were deemed to justify the taking away of a life, that we must give it as the last of our extracts from these curious records.

The entry is dated May 29, 1755.



A certain Mattio Pirona had left Venice without the authorization of the government, and had betaken himself to Triest. He was by trade a "cavafongo," literally a mud excavator, as we should say a "navvy," or a contractor for the execution of such works. This man being at Triest, contracted there to execute a canal, which, by opening a communication from the port to the interior of the city, would be of great benefit to the commerce of Triest. The tribunal, therefore, "considering that everything which might facilitate the commerce of that city would turn to the disadvantage of the commerce of Venice," addressed to Pirona repeated orders to abandon the work he had undertaken and return to Venice, where a full pardon awaited him, besides other advantageous proposals. Instead, however, of obeying these commands, Pirona endeavoured to engage other Venetians to join him in his undertaking, and, when it turned out that the canal did not wholly answer the purpose for which it was intended, himself planned and set to work on the execution of a second. "But so great and so traitorous offences on the part of a subject moving their eminences to just indignation, they determined to consider this matter as an affair of

State, and decided to attempt the chastisement of the culprit as a warning to other subjects." Therefore they despatched one Gelfino Versa, "a person well tried in other important executions of a like nature," with orders to find the means of "taking out of the world such a fellow as this Pirona, guilty of crime against the State." The price of the service entrusted to this emissary was fixed at two hundred and sixty zequins, sixty to be paid in advance, and two hundred when the job was done !

## CHAPTER II.

THE Gelfino Versa, mentioned in the former chapter, was one of the celebrated "confidants" of the Inquisition, the habitual employment of whom forms one of the most curious chapters in the history of the institution. Another equally interesting portion of the subject is that which relates to the very few recorded cases of escape from its terrible hands. And the two branches of the subject are singularly linked together by the strange circumstance that the most remarkable man in the whole list of the secret agents of the tribunal, was also the hero of the most extraordinary by far of the very few cases of escape from the prisons of the Inquisition that ever occurred.

This man was the once notorious Giacomo Casanova. His extraordinary life and adventures made him well known in his own day

from one end of Europe to the other. And his *Memoirs*, written by himself in his old age, would have made him much better known than he is to English readers of the present day, were it not that the book is one of the most scandalously licentious and grossly immoral which was ever issued from the press. Though Casanova was a Venetian by birth and education, he has written the memoirs of his life in French; and a cheap popular edition of the work for general reading was published at Paris in 1843, in four foolscap octavo volumes.

It is impossible to recommend any English person to read this book; but the representation of the state of society, especially at Venice about the middle of the eighteenth century, is most extraordinary. Even to the reader, to whom the social condition of Paris under Louis XV. is nothing new, the cynicism of corruption described as having been universal at Venice seems almost past belief. No doubt this Giacomo Casanova was a most worthless and profligate scoundrel; and it is to be expected that the account given by such a man of any society in which he had lived, would paint it under its worst aspect. Nevertheless, after all reasonable allowance has been made on this

score, it is impossible to doubt that, with the exception, perhaps, of the latter times of the Roman Empire, the world has never seen so grossly corrupt a society as that of Venice at the time spoken of. It must be admitted, too, that the unblushing narrative of abominations of all sorts, which Casanova has put forth as the story of his life, has very much the air of being a truthful story. He was a man of very considerable talent, and his book is undeniably well written. He constantly gives the names of those to whom he is attributing the most unheard-of profligacy; and in many cases the names so given are well known in contemporary history. Some of the worst abominations, for instance, narrated by him, with an utter apparent unconsciousness that he is saying anything which ought not to be said, are attributed to a Mr. Murray, who was the representative of England at Venice at the time (1756). The nature, too, of some of the things he professes to have done himself, is such as to make it seem improbable that any man could tell them of himself falsely. He relates, for instance, with perfect coolness and impassibility, how he became a partner in a gambling bank, which was fraudulently carried on, and made large profits by

swindling and false play ! But his main resource was imposing upon the credulity of the wealthy by a pretended method of divining the secrets of the future ; all which, and the base swindling of it, he recounts with perfect self-satisfaction. Indeed, one of the most curious features of the book, as a picture of the time, is the truly wonderful gullibility and fatuous credulity which he finds among people of all classes of society ; just at a time, it is curious to remark, when all belief in revealed religion was giving way.

Such is the nature of almost every page of this extraordinary book. But there is one passage of it, of considerable extent, which may be read without any offence. It consists of the pages in which he describes, with minute detail, and at considerable length, the manner of his escape from the prison of the Inquisition.

There were many other cases, in which the same persons were at one period of their lives confidential agents of the Tribunal, and at another its prisoners. But in all these instances the employment of "confidant" came first ; and it was some abuse of the position which led to the imprisonment. It was not so in the case of Casanova.

This man was born at Venice, in 1725. His



father had run away from a family in a higher social position, and had become an actor. He ran away with a shoemaker's daughter, who became an actress, and appeared on the stage with her husband for the first time in London in 1727. The first part of his memoirs—about a volume and a half out of the four volumes—describe with the most unblushing cynicism his career at Venice, in such sort as to justify what has been said above of the state of society at Venice at that period. This portion of his work brings his story of his life to the July of 1755, when he was thirty years old.

It was early one morning of that month that Casanova received a visit from the dreaded "Fante" of the Inquisition, known popularly at Venice as "Messer grande." He was ordered to dress himself; did so, and found a posse of archers in the outer room. "It is singular," he remarks on this occasion, "that at London, where everybody is brave, they only employ one man to arrest another; whereas in my dear country (Venice), where everybody is a great coward, they require thirty for the same purpose. Perhaps it is because the coward in the character of assailant is more afraid than the coward assailed, a situ-

ation which may sometimes give to a coward the courage of despair."

He is taken before the Secretary to the Inquisition, who merely looks at him, and says to the officer, "That's the fellow, is it? Put him into safe keeping." And he is at once taken to the terrible "Piombi." No sort of intimation was given to him as to the nature of the offence or accusation which had led to his arrest, and he protests that he was wholly innocent of any crime against the State which it would have been the duty of the Inquisitors to take cognizance of. But his own account of himself describes him as an habitual and systematic cheater at play; as habitually preying on the credulity of people—sundry patricians of Venice among the number—by swindling pretences of divination; as an avowed disbeliever in the doctrines of religion; as an habitual desecrator of nunneries and sharer in the profligacy of their inmates; and surely there is enough here to induce a Tribunal, which considered itself charged with the general supervision of the conduct of the citizens, to deem it high time to put an end to such a career, without having recourse, as Casanova in his *Memoirs* has, to the supposition that his misfortune was caused by

the friendship of one of the Inquisitors for a play-writer whose works Casanova had bitterly ridiculed.

He proceeds to describe minutely the prison under the roof of the Ducal Palace, to which he was conducted ; and any visitor to the sights of Venice may still satisfy himself of the perfect accuracy of the description. These prisons were enormously strong wooden boxes, the doors of which opened on the main open space of the huge garret beneath the leads of the Palace. That one in which Casanova was confined was about twelve feet square by five and a half feet high, besides a sort of recess in one of the sides large enough to hold a small bed. This cage was, or rather *is*—for it remains precisely *in statu quo*—lighted by a window two feet square in the door, which, as the writer says, would have rendered the prison tolerably light, had not the main corner-beam of the building projected across the outer window, from which the borrowed light of the prison was derived, so as to obscure it almost entirely. For this reason, and by reason of the extra lowness of the den, which made it impossible to stand upright in it, and which was caused by the situation of it under the corner of the roof, this prison in

which Casanova was placed was the worst in the whole range of the "Piombi."

And when Casanova entered his prison it was July!

His description of his sufferings there, written apparently with the simplicity of perfect truth, is very terrible. He found his prison absolutely void of any article of furniture whatsoever, unless a plank one foot wide, fixed in the wall at a height of four feet from the floor, could be called such. In the garret on which the hole in his door looked, he saw great numbers of immense rats, which compelled him to close the shutter belonging to it for fear that his prison should be invaded by them. The gaoler who conducted him asked him, before leaving him, what he would wish to eat. He answered, with ill-humour, that he had not yet determined. Thereupon the man turned on his heel, locked the door, and left him. He remained, he says, standing with his arms resting on the lower frame of the little window for eight hours in a sort of stupor. Then, as the darkness of night began to deepen the gloom of his prison, he was roused by the sound of the large bell of a clock not far off, and was startled and terrified at the thought that no human being

had come near him to bring food or any other necessary. A transport of rage, he says, seized him, and he began to rave and scream and shout with the utmost power of his voice for a good hour—of course without the smallest indication that any human ear had heard his cries!

After this, being perfectly exhausted, he threw himself on the floor of his dungeon, and slept till he was awakened by the clock tolling midnight. He relates how, stretching out his hand on awaking, it came in contact with another hand, cold as that of a corpse; how he was overpowered with horror almost to the losing of his senses; how he came to the conclusion that the dead body of a prisoner put to death in the solitude of that awful place must have been put into his cell while he slept—as a warning, perhaps, of the fate that awaited himself; and how, after a while, he found that it was his own other hand which he had grasped, which had become deadly cold and altogether insensible, from the arm having been bent under him, as he lay on the hard boards.

There was no more sleeping after that, and he sate still listening to the clock as it tolled the hours, till, at half-past eight, the gaoler

returned to the cell, and asked him whether he had yet made up his mind what he would like to eat?

Then he perceived that his long fasting had been a punishment for the pert answer he had given to his gaoler when asked what he would like to eat, and had not arisen from any intention on the part of the Inquisitors to starve him to death.

This time he ordered the materials of a good dinner, whereupon the gaoler asked him for money to buy the things with. He had three sequins in his purse, and handed one of them to the gaoler. He was then asked whether he did not want a bed and some articles of furniture; "for," said Lorenzo, the gaoler, "if you suppose that you are put here for a short time only, you are mistaken." The man handed him a pencil and paper, and told him to write down what he wanted. He made out a list, and, on reading it to Lorenzo—who could not do so himself—was told that many of the articles named must be scratched out. "Books, paper, pens, razors, looking-glass; all that must be scratched out, for those things are forbidden here." Then the man asked where he was to go for the bed and articles of clothing and



furniture ; and, having received instructions on this point, departed.

At mid-day Lorenzo returned, with two or three subordinates, bringing the dinner and the other articles, together with an ivory spoon, purchased with part of the prisoner's money, and which was the only utensil permitted him to eat with. He also brought two large volumes, which the Secretary, who could not permit him to have the books he had asked for (which, in truth, were anything but edifying reading), had sent him as a favour. These books turned out to be, one of them, the work of a Spanish nun, entitled *The Mystic City of the Sister Maria de Jesus, of Agrada* ; the other, *The Adoration of the Holy Ghost and of our Lord Jesus Christ*, by the Jesuit Caravita.

Despite the bed which it had been allowed him to have, the following night was worse than the one which had preceded it. The noise made by the rats, and the stunning sound of the great bell of the clock of St. Mark, which seemed as if it were absolutely in the cell, prevented the possibility of sleep. The dreadful heat, which drove the prisoner to lay aside every article of clothing or covering, and caused the perspiration to fall in streams from his body,

seemed to make the drawing of each breath a painful effort. And the innumerable swarms of fleas which fixed themselves on every part of his body, threw him into nervous convulsions and poisoned all his blood.

At the end of nineteen days the three sequins which the prisoner had had in his pocket at the time of his arrest were all gone. Lorenzo asked for money to buy the morrow's dinner, and was told that his prisoner had none. The next day he came and told him that the Tribunal had assigned him fifty sous a day for his maintenance.

"Seventy-five livres a month," states Casanova, "was more than I needed, inasmuch as I had no longer any appetite. The extreme heat, and the inanition caused by want of proper nourishment, had enfeebled me. We were in the 'Dog-days.' And the power of the sun's rays, which beat directly on my prison, kept me as in a furnace; so that the perspiration which flowed from my wretched body soaked the floor on either side of the chair, on which I was compelled to sit in a state of perfect nudity."

The next day he was so manifestly ill, that the gaoler, without any demand on his part, brought him a physician. The doctor succeeded in curing him of the fever which had

prostrated him, obtained for him a volume of Boëthius instead of the volumes of mystic piety which the secretary had selected for him; and also permission to walk every day in the open space of the garret for a few minutes, while the gaoler was occupied in making his bed and sweeping his cell.

This permission it was which rendered possible, as the reader will see, that celebrated escape from the "Piombi," which would otherwise have been utterly impossible.

One day in November a very startling incident happened. The prisoner was standing at the little window in the door of his cell, gazing at the outer window, the light from which was, as has been mentioned, almost entirely obscured by the huge corner-beam of the roof which projected over it. All of a sudden, Casanova saw this immense beam turn a little on its axis towards one side, and then turn slowly back again. He thought for a moment that he must have gone mad, and lost the correct use of his senses. But a certain swimming of the cell having at the same moment nearly thrown him off his legs, he doubted not, after a moment of reflection, that the phenomenon was caused by an earthquake. It was, in fact, a slight manifesta-

tion of the same earthquake that was in that same hour destroying Lisbon.

It was one day shortly after the earthquake that the prisoner took advantage of the few minutes' walk in the garret which had been permitted to him, while the gaoler was sweeping out his cell, to cast a shrewd and curious eye on a variety of objects of the kind which may be supposed to accumulate in the course of years in such a place. Among these he spied a small polished piece of black marble, which he picked up, secreted, and carried back with him to his cell, without in the least knowing, as he declares, to what use he should or could ever put it. It turned out afterwards to be touchstone. And upon another similar occasion, a few days subsequently, he found, hidden under a heap of old waste-paper, a large iron bolt as thick as a man's thumb, and about a foot and a half long. He laid hands on this, succeeded in hiding it under the dressing-gown he had, and conveying it into his cell. A safe hiding-place was found for it in the stuffed seat of the arm-chair, which he had been allowed to send for. Then, with incredible patience and labour, and at the cost of wearing and lacerating his hands to the bone, he succeeded, by dint of

rubbing the end of the bolt on the marble, in producing a sharp point at the end of the former. And thus he was in possession of a very formidable and effective weapon, whether for offence or defence.

Still he had not as yet the smallest idea of what use this weapon could be to him. But, after four days of meditation on the subject, he determined to attempt making with it a hole in the floor of his cell! His previous knowledge of the geography of the vast palace assured him that his cell must be situated immediately over the room of the Secretary to the Inquisition. And his plan was to make a hole in the floor and in the ceiling below it, also of wood, large enough for his body to pass through it, then to let himself down by the sheets of his bed in the night, hide himself under the great table in the middle of the Secretary's room, and then, as soon as the doors should be opened, which was regularly done every morning, escape from the Palace, trusting that he might be able to do so, among the number of people frequenting the stairs and passages of the vast building, without attracting attention.

Of course the difficulties attending such a scheme were enormous. The first that arose

was the difficulty of preventing his gaoler from detecting the work he was engaged on during its progress, for he had reason to think that he should have to pierce three very considerable thicknesses of planking before he could reach the panelling which formed the ceiling of the room below. The difficulty was rendered greater by the daily habit of the gaoler to sweep out his cell, which he himself had insisted on being done, in the hope of thus alleviating the torment of the fleas.

This was the plan he conceived for conquering this first obstacle.

He told the servants of the gaoler who swept the cell not to do so. They readily enough saved themselves that trouble, and nothing was said for a week. But the prisoner was far too cautiously cunning to trust to this for commencing his operations. This was but the beginning of his plan. At the end of a week Lorenzo asked why he did not choose to have his cell swept.

“Because, the fact is, the dust so caused gives me such an access of cough, that I am afraid of some fatal accident.”

“I will have the floor sprinkled then, sir.”

“Alas, Lorenzo! that would be worse still.



The damp would give me a cold, which would assuredly kill me with coughing."

So for another week the cell remained unswept. At the end of that time, either from some suspicion or from thinking the operation necessary, the gaoler one morning told his men to remove the bed and sweep out the cell. He lighted a candle, moreover, for the better performing this work, which led the prisoner to think that his suspicions had been aroused. The cell was duly swept, and everything was found in proper order. But when Lorenzo made his daily visit the next morning, his prisoner was coughing with the most frightful violence. He exhibited his handkerchief soaked with blood, which he had carefully drawn from his finger; declared that the sweeping of the dust in his cell had endangered his life, and that a doctor must be called to him.

The doctor was quite deceived, and volunteered an anecdote of a case of a young man who had broken a blood-vessel from swallowing dust. The gaoler was thoroughly taken in, and swore by all that was holy that he would never again sweep the cell of a prisoner with such delicate lungs.

Then, and not till then, Casanova began the

long labour of digging a hole in the flooring of his cell under his bed.

Then he was prevented from pursuing his work by the arrival of a new prisoner, who was made to share his cell. It was not till fifteen days after Easter that he was delivered from the presence of this sharer of his captivity. He then once more set to work with redoubled activity, fearing the arrival of some new partner in his cell. And in three weeks he had dug through three thicknesses of planking, making together six inches of thickness. But beneath that he found a flooring of that sort of mixed marble fragments and cement, which is so common in all Venetian buildings. This at first made him despair; but, with immense difficulty and perseverance, he overcame this obstacle also, and at the end of four more days had reached the panel which formed the ceiling of the room below.

Just then a new prisoner was again brought to share Casanova's cell. He turned out to be an old acquaintance of his. And when the new-comer, tormented in the same way that Casanova had been, demanded why the cell should not be swept out, he found himself obliged to tell him the truth, and showed him

the progress he had made towards a possibility of escape. The new-comer promised to aid Casanova to descend into the chamber below, but declined to attempt flight himself.

At last, on the 23rd of August, when he had been in the "Piombi" rather more than a year, the preparations for his flight were completed, all but breaking through the last skin of the panel of the ceiling—which, of course, had been left intact with the most minute care; and he fixed the night of the 27th for the attempt. But on the 25th a terrible misfortune happened to him. The gaoler on that morning entered his cell with a cheerful visage, wished him joy of the good news he brought him: he was to be moved from that cell, the worst in the whole range, to one recently vacated, which had much more air and light.

Here was a blow! That all the painful labour he had so patiently undergone was thrown away, was the least part of the misfortune. His attempt at evasion would infallibly be discovered.

His only solace in this terrible moment was, that his arm-chair, in which the sharpened bolt he had prepared with so much toil was concealed, was moved into the other cell with him.

Then the storm burst. No sooner was the prisoner's bed removed than the terribly accusing hole in the floor was but too apparent. The gaoler returned to the new cell, where the prisoner was, foaming at the mouth with rage. And he might well be angry, for the escape of a prisoner was his own death-warrant.

His first demand was for the tools with which the flooring had been cut, and the name of the attendant turnkey who had furnished them. The prisoner remained mute. The gaoler said savagely that he could soon find the means to make him speak.

"If I am put to the torture, of course I must tell the truth. I shall have to confess that you yourself supplied me with the tools!" said Casanova, with unfaltering steadiness. The subordinates grinned, and the gaoler, having in vain searched the person and cell of the prisoner, rushed out of the cell blaspheming horribly, and holding his head between his hands in an agony of rage and perplexity.

A short time for reflection convinced him that his safest plan was to cause the hole to be mended, and say nothing about it.

During eight days the gaoler revenged himself on his prisoner for his attempt at evasion

by shutting up the window, which gave air and light to the cell, and by bringing him food that was utterly uneatable. On the ninth day, in compliance with the demand of the prisoner, Lorenzo brought his account of the expenditure of the fifty sous a day allowed by the Tribunal for Casanova's keep. He thought fit to bring him at the same time an excellent roast-fowl, and a basket of lemons, which had been sent by a friend of the prisoner's in the town. Casanova, despite the fury he had been feeling all these days against the gaoler, was so pleased that he told the man to keep the balance of several sequins which resulted from the account. Lorenzo then, in milder fashion, strove to persuade Casanova to tell him how he had obtained the tools needed for making the hole in the other cell. The prisoner calmly replied that he himself (the gaoler) had furnished them to him. Then in answer to his adjurations and entreaties for explanation as to what the prisoner meant, and how he (Lorenzo) had supplied him with tools, he replied gravely that he would tell him, and would tell him with perfect truth; but that he would only do so in the presence of the Secretary!

The unhappy gaoler was checkmated, cowed,

and beaten. He ended by imploring his prisoner to say no word more upon the subject, and to remember that he was a poor man, who had a wife and family depending upon him, and who would assuredly be ruined by the discovery of what the prisoner had done, despite his vigilance.

Thenceforward the relations between prisoner and gaoler were more amicable. And the unlucky man began a course of indulgences, which eventually led to the escape of his captive.

Casanova begged for books to read. He had read all those that had been allowed to him. The gaoler said that there was a prisoner in a neighbouring cell who had several books, which no doubt he would be willing to lend to his fellow-prisoner.

The captive in the neighbouring cell turned out to be a monk, imprisoned for licentious conduct. He made no difficulty in lending his books. Casanova lent his in return. And thus a system of correspondence was readily established between them.

Ever since Casanova's removal into his new cell, and the discovery of the hole in the floor of the old one, the gaoler or his assistants had every morning sounded every part of the floor



and walls of his prison. But he observed that they never thought of sounding the ceiling! He at once determined that it must be by that way alone that he could escape.

But how was it possible for him to get at the ceiling? or, even if he could do so, how could the long labour of making a hole through the solid woodwork of it be accomplished either in one day or without immediately attracting the attention of his gaoler?

The scheme he hit upon was this: In the first place he communicated all his plans to his neighbouring prisoner the monk, and found him willing to join in an attempt at escape. Then he instructed him to cause the gaoler to buy for him several of the ordinary devotional broadsides, with prints of the virgin and saints, etc. And these he was to stick up all about the sides of his cell, as for purposes of devotion; and behind one of these, constantly replaced so as to conceal the work, a hole was to be made by the monk in the side of his cell. There remained, however, the great difficulty of conveying the invaluable sharpened bolt to the monk, without which he had no means of even attempting the work. At last there seemed to be an opportunity of attempting this. It was a chance!—one

involving tremendous risk! But then every portion of the scheme necessarily involved risks which offered only a small chance of ultimate success; and if the thing was to be attempted at all, it was useless to recoil before such chances.

One of the volumes lent by the monk to Casanova was a large folio, bound in parchment loose at the back, in the fashion in which old books, especially Italian books, are often seen. Casanova tried to conceal the bolt inside the binding of the back of this book. The weapon was too long! It protruded nearly an inch at either end! Nevertheless his powers of invention were not yet finally conquered. Some festival occurred, on which a certain sort of cake, or pudding, of macaroni, made with much oil, was usually eaten. Casanova told the gaoler that he wished, in return for the kindness received from his neighbour prisoner, to send him and the companion in his cell (for there was another prisoner in the monk's cell, a certain Conte Asquin,<sup>err</sup><sub>z</sub> an old and immensely fat man) a dish of macaroni for the festival, prepared by his own hands. He furnished the money necessary for buying the different articles, and then saying that he meant to do the thing as handsomely as possible, begged the gaoler to bring

him the largest dish he could get. The manner was, it seems, to prepare macaroni after this fashion in one of those very large, flat, shallow copper dishes, which are still so frequently seen in Italy. All the preparations were accomplished according to the prisoner's wishes. He prepared his *plat*, taking especial care that the dish should be filled with oil to the very brim, so that it could only be carried with great care, and in the most perfect equilibrium. Then he placed it on the folio with the precious bolt in it, sticking out at either end, but not so far as not to be hidden by the dish. Then, when the gaoler came, he told him to take the book and the dish together into the neighbouring cell. He put them himself into the man's hands, laughingly begging him to take the utmost care not to spill the oil. Of course the monk had been informed of the whole scheme, and knew with what precautions he was to receive the present.

All went well; and the unconscious gaoler thus himself carried the weapon which was to open a way for the escape of the captives!

The plan of sticking up pictures of saints on the sides of the monk's cell, so as to hide his operations on them with the bolt turned into a spike, also succeeded perfectly. In a few days

he had made a hole in the wooden wall of the cell, and was able to get out of it, and on to the roof of that in which Casanova was confined ; on which he began his operations, taking extreme care, of course, to leave a thin skin of wood untouched till the moment of evasion should have arrived.

This was eventually fixed for the 31st of October, at mid-day. The morning visit of the gaoler and his assistants would be then over, and (unless in consequence of some unusual occurrence) there would be no fear of any further visit till the next morning. At mid-day precisely he heard the monk on the ceiling above him, and in a very few minutes more the thin crust of wood, which alone remained, was broken through, and the monk descended into Casanova's cell.

The next difficulty to be overcome arose from the fear and misgivings of his accomplice, who, despite the success of their enterprise up to that point, began to feel sure that they never should succeed in getting absolutely free out of the Palace. His lamentations, predictions of failure, and reproaches when he found that the enterprise was a more arduous one than he had anticipated, had to be listened to, not without infinite disgust, by the bolder spirit, on whom

was now cast all the difficulty of the undertaking. And these difficulties, already overcome, were as nothing to those now before them.

The first step, however, after they had got on to the top of the cell, through the hole which the monk had made, presented no great difficulty. This was to rip open a sufficient portion of the leaden roofing of the Palace to allow them to pass out on to the roof; and by the help of the sharpened bolt this was readily accomplished. To reach the ridge of the roof was a matter of much greater difficulty. It had been necessary to wait till midnight before getting on to the roof, because it was a bright moonlight night: all Venice would be walking on the Square of St. Mark; the fugitives would have been seen on the roof; and it was, therefore, absolutely essential to wait till the moon had gone down. But in the meantime a thick fog arose, which, if it had the advantage of increasing the darkness, brought with it the very serious disadvantage of making the leads so slippery that it was with the most extreme difficulty that they were able to crawl on hands and knees up the steep ascent. Of course a slip would have been immediately fatal. By dint of exceeding exertion, Casanova mainly dragging up the

monk as well as himself, they succeeded in seating themselves astride the ridge.

The next step was to find some means of fixing the end of the rope by which they were to let themselves down into the *piazza* from the roof. This rope had been prepared by the assiduous labour of the hours between the last morning visit of the goaler and the time of escape; and was composed of all their bedding torn into shreds, twisted and carefully knotted. They had enough of it to reach from the roof to the ground; but a long and scrupulous examination of the entire roof served only to show unmistakably that there was no possibility of fixing the rope to any object that could be trusted to hold it.

Then truly the prospect began to look very black indeed! To give up all hope of escape and return to their cells was by no means the worst before them. It would have been absolutely impossible to conceal the traces of their outbreak, and condemnation to the "Pozzi" \* for

\* The "Pozzi"—literally "wells"—are a range of prisons, yet more terrible than the "Piombi," constructed among the foundations of the Ducal Palace, without light, and accessible only by a dark stair leading from the first floor of the Palace, and by a little postern on the level of



life would have been the sure consequence. Rather than that, Casanova was thoroughly resolved to precipitate himself into the Canal that runs between the Ducal Palace and the prison on the other side of the "Bridge of Sighs."

At last, in the course of his examination of every part of the roof, he observed a small garet window in that slope of the roof which looked towards the Canal. To descend the slope of the roof, though not less dangerous, was far less difficult than to climb up it. Casanova let himself slide down, trusting to his power of directing himself forwards, and being pulled up by the little roof of the window. He succeeded in this. Then lying along the ridge of this little roof on his stomach, with his legs extended up the slope of the main roof above it, he projected his head far enough over the edge of the roof of the window to see that it was a small window of little panes set in lead, and protected by an the Canal, underneath the "Bridge of Sighs," by which the bodies of executed criminals, and of those who died there, were removed. Thus, the gorgeous public life of Venice, the assemblies of its senators and statesmen, the stately ceremonial of its receptions, were all transacted with despair and wailing over their heads, and despair and wailing under their feet.

iron grating. Of course the window mattered little. But the iron grating?

With infinite labour, at the most frightful risk of being precipitated into the Canal below, and with hands lacerated and bleeding, Casanova, after a quarter of an hour's work, succeeded in wrenching the grating from the wall with his trusty sharpened bolt. Then he returned to the spot on the main ridge of the roof where he had left his companion, who received him with a torrent of imprecations for having been so long absent. Nevertheless, he continued to labour for his escape as well as for his own. Having succeeded in getting the monk on to the roof of the now open little window, it was not very difficult for one of the two to be let down through the window by means of the cord by the other. But how was the second to follow? The monk absolutely refused to help Casanova to descend. The latter, therefore, tied the cord round the body of the former, and succeeded in letting him down till he reached a floor. They found that the distance from the window to the floor was at least fifty feet. And now Casanova was alone on the roof, utterly at a loss to find the means of rejoining his companion. At last, after much

search, he discovered on a remote part of the roof a ladder left there by workmen. With considerable labour and difficulty he succeeded in dragging it to the little ridge roof over the small garret window. But then came the question how, unaided by any other hand, he was to get one end of the long ladder in at the window. Below the window, it is to be understood, there was nothing save a few yards of very steeply sloping leads, a narrow stone cornice gutter, and then—the sheer fall of some two hundred feet into the Canal below! The extreme difficulty and peril of the operation to be performed may be readily conceived!

Perched on the roof of the garret window, however, he did contrive, by the aid of his cord of bedclothes, to get one end of the ladder into the aperture of the window, and to pull it onwards till the end struck against the roof of the window in the inside. In this position it is easy to understand that no amount of force could make it enter further, save by raising the other end, which projected far beyond the extreme edge of the roof of the Palace. There was nothing for it, therefore, but to attempt this. Casanova let himself slip down on his stomach till the toes of his feet rested against

the outside of the marble gutter which forms the cornice of the roof,—the toes only, for the gutter was too shallow to admit of more. In this position he strove to raise the ladder, having, as will be understood, a strong leverage against him, inasmuch as the part projecting beyond the fulcrum formed by his hand was much longer than that between his hand and the other end inside the window.

While using his utmost effort to accomplish this, he raised himself on his knees in order to exert more strength; his toes slipped, and he was launched over the edge of the roof, till, by one of those instinctive and despairing efforts of which a man is capable only in similar desperate circumstances, he found himself arrested in his downward course by the clinging of his elbows to the cavity of the gutter. “A horrible moment,” he says, writing many years afterwards, when an old man, “at which I still shudder, and which it is, perhaps, impossible to imagine in all its horror. The natural instinct of preservation caused me, almost without knowing what I was doing, to exert my utmost strength to cling on, and—I am almost tempted to say miraculously—I succeeded.”

Lacerated, bleeding, trembling, streaming

with perspiration at every pore; he did succeed in regaining his position on the roof. The effort, which had so nearly cost him his life, had pushed the ladder three or four feet further into the window; and the remainder of the task of rejoining the monk on the floor of the room into which the window opened was comparatively easy.

As also was the remainder of his escape from the Palace. There were a few doors to be broken open; but the trusty weapon which had already stood him in such good stead soon disposed of them. And in that vast building at that hour of the night, and especially just at that time of the year, when it was the habit of Venetian officers of state to take a few days' holiday at their estates on the mainland, there was little danger of any noise being heard.

After the breaking, more or less difficult, of a few doors, the fugitives found themselves at the head of the great staircase, so well known to travellers, which leads from the great corridor, running round the interior of the court of the Palace on the first floor. Thence the way was perfectly open to them to the head of the yet better known "giant" stairs, and at the foot of them to the main door of the Palace. This was

shut and locked, because it was not yet the hour at which it was opened in the morning. It stands always open all day, but Casanova judged that it was wisest not to wait for that hour of the morning. Having first repaired as well as he could the mischief done both to his flesh and his clothes by the various incidents of his escape—which it was not so easy to do, for both clothes and limbs were torn to bits and covered with blood, but he had still the bundle containing his wardrobe with him—he showed himself at one of the grated windows looking from the court on to the piazza.

Then some early passer-by saw him, and went to tell the porter that there was a man locked up in the court. Casanova says that, dressed as he was, he looked just like a man who had left a ball and passed the rest of the night in debauchery and disorder. The monk was dressed like a peasant. Placing himself close to the door, with the monk behind him, and grasping his sharpened bolt in his hand, thoroughly determined to strike the porter down with it if he should make any resistance to his exit, he awaited the opening of the door; and the instant it was opened glided through it on to the open piazza. The porter seemed



too much struck with amazement to do aught but stand agape and stare, so there was no need for violence; and Casanova and his companion, passing quickly to the "riva" of the "piazzetta," had no difficulty in finding a couple of gondoliers to take them to Mestre.

But the escaped prisoner knew too well the ways of the power against which he was trying the resources of his courage and wit, to imagine for an instant that he was really free till he had placed himself on the further side of the frontier of the territory of the Republic; and the nearest point at which this could be accomplished was the boundary separating the dominions of Venice from those of the Bishop of Trent.

This, after a variety of adventures and hairbreadth escapes, which cannot here be related at length, he succeeded in accomplishing.

Before leaving Mestre he found himself face to face with a "sbirro," or officer in the employment of the Inquisition, who knew him personally and knew that he ought then to have been in the "piombi" of the Ducal Palace. Fortunately the spot was solitary, and he escaped by menacing the life of the officer. This danger, as well as many others, was brought upon him by the selfishness, cowardice,

and imbecility of the monk his companion, whom nevertheless he would not desert (much to his honour, if his own account is to be credited) till he saw him safe and provided for in Germany. One night he passed in the house of a chief officer of the police of the Inquisition, who was absent from home scouring the country in search of him, and to whose wife he represented that he was a friend of her husband.

At Munich he found friends who took him with them to Paris, where, as ever, he once more fell on his legs, and began a new course of very extraordinary adventures, of which by no means the least curious was that which made him, about eighteen years subsequently, a "confidant"—*i.e.*, spy and informer—of the Tribunal, whose means of action he stigmatizes as infamous, when they were exerted against himself.



“THE THUNDERBOLT OF  
PAINTING.”



# “THE THUNDERBOLT OF PAINTING,”

## CHAPTER I.

AMONG the “stones of Venice” there is a pile, still retaining the picturesque form into which they were arranged some four hundred years ago, that deserves perhaps more notice from the stranger than it has generally received. The fact is, that the modest dwelling in question labours under the disadvantage, well-nigh fatal in these latter days of hurry and shortness of time, of being “out of the way.” Whole provinces in these our times languish if smitten by no more terrible curse than that of lying out of the world’s great highways; and once-famous cities sink to decay if the railway-engineer and the iron horse have not condescended to recognize their importance. In



such an age it cannot be wondered at that the building in question should remain unnoticed, situated as it is in one of the most obscure and outlying parts of the wonderful sea-city, although it was the dwelling-place and the death-place of the most extraordinary and most powerful intellect of all those who contributed to make the school of Venetian art, perhaps, on the whole, the greatest which the world has yet seen. For here abode, while he was in the flesh, he who has been named "Il fulmine della Pittura."

This extraordinary man was Jacopo Robusti, more generally known by his universally accepted nickname, Il Tintoretto.

Of course those who submit themselves to the *peine forte et dure* of being driven in herds round Europe by the whip-crack of a contractor of grand tours, arranged after the fashion of the ancient "Royal Game of Goose," "Here, stop one turn to admire Mont Blanc," and "Here, stop three turns to see Venice, and become acquainted with the Venetian school of art;"—of course these unfortunates cannot be expected to employ any of their counted minutes either in wandering into unfrequented parts of the labyrinth-like city, or in acquiring any

of the knowledge which would lead them to feel that the very obscure spot in question was in truth a shrine worthy of a pilgrimage.

Indeed, to tell the truth, more leisurely seekers, even if their Venetian studies had led them to take an interest in the particulars of the life of that extraordinary man, of whose powers no idea can be formed by any one who has not studied his works in the city in which they were created, would not find it an easy task to discover the whereabouts of the house in which he worked, triumphed, sorrowed, and died. It is true there is, or, to speak more correctly, has been, an inscription placed on the front of the house, recording the fact that Tintoretto lived and died within those walls. But it is so effaced as to have become illegible. Venice has, I think, indulged less than most others of the cities of Italy in thus recording the local habitations of its illustrious citizens. Perhaps the Venetian municipality would excuse itself on the ground that to do that completely for Venice, which some other cities have done even to the gathering up of the humblest fragments, would require them to cover the whole of their city with inscriptions. But the legend which marks the great painter's

house having been placed on it, might be maintained in legibility.

The house itself, however, is very difficult to find. It is situated, as has been said, in a very out-of-the-way part of the city, and all places are sufficiently difficult to find in Venice, as everybody knows who has ever strayed among its canals and lanes beyond the Grand Canal and the immediate neighbourhood of the great Piazza. Then again the most recent notices, which he will be able to find on the subject if he betake himself to the assistance of the ever kind and obliging librarian and servants of St. Mark's Library, will send him on a wild-goose chase. These most recent notices are of the date of 1834, and since that all the “civic numbers”—not numbers of street by street, it is to be understood, but numbers running over the whole city—have been entirely changed. And here the explorer would find himself altogether at a nonplus if it did not occur to him, as it did to the present writer, to have recourse to the authorities by whom these numbers are arranged. By the gentlemen presiding over that section of the municipality charged with this department, though their official duties in no wise included the furnishing of any such

information, he was received with the utmost courtesy, but at first with no great encouragement as to ultimate success. Some turning over of old registers, however, and much patient good-nature, succeeded at last, and the actual number of the house in question was ascertained. After this all further difficulty had to be dealt with and overcome by the gondolier. And at last the house was found.

If the explorer will follow the Grand Canal, beginning from the church of the Salute, passing under the Rialto, till he reach the huge, well-known, and unmistakable Palazzo Pesaro (one of the most magnificent buildings of the seventeenth century *barocco* period, the work of Longhena, who also built the Salute, and whose works are anathematized by a most conclusively motived judgment by Ruskin), and will then turn into the canal, called the Rio di San Felice, which opens into the Grand Canal on his right hand, immediately opposite to the Pesaro Palace, he will find at no great distance another canal turning to the left out of the Rio di San Felice, and called the Rio di Santa Fosca. Following this, he will, after he has passed under the first bridge in his course, find the Fondamenta de' Servi—*i.e.*, the Build-

ings of the Servites—on his right hand; and will pass, not *under*, but *by*, another bridge on the same side, on the steps of which the celebrated Servite Friar, Paolo Sarpi, was struck down by the assassin who, at the instigation of the Court of Rome, endeavoured to take his life as he was returning on foot from the Council Chamber of the Republic to his own convent, and had nearly reached the door of it. A few yards further on he will see the beautiful ruin of the Gothic entrance to the convent, now destroyed. And immediately beyond this, turning to the right, into the Rio de' Greci, and thence, still turning to the right, into the Rio della Sensa, he will soon find himself at the landing-steps of the Campo de' Mori. Landing here, he will have the Campo—or Piazza, as it would be called in other Italian cities—in front of him, and a quay before the houses, bordering the canal he has just been passing along, on his right hand. The first object on which his eye will probably rest, as he ascends the four or five steps from the canal, will be a strange carved and coloured figure niched into the corner of the nearest house after the fashion of a caryatid, one of those seventeenth-century burlesque figures, which that age delighted in.

It is the figure of "Ser Rioba," the Venetian Pasquin, renowned in many a civic story under the old republic, but whose function was probably a sinecure under a rule which understood raillery so little as that of the Austrians. Within a few yards to the right of this figure, as one faces the houses with one's back to the canal, is the house which Tintoretto inhabited for at least the last twenty years of his life.

Although the interior arrangements of the house have been almost entirely changed, the façade remains very nearly such as it was when the great artist inhabited it. It is a small and modest dwelling—not so good a one as that which Andria del Sorto built for himself in the Via San Sebastiano at Florence, for example; but it is a good specimen of the Venetian Gothic architecture which succeeded to the Byzantine style in the domestic buildings of the Queen of the Adriatic, and must, in all probability, have been erected at least a hundred years before it became the dwelling of Tintoretto. There is the large central window—of two arches in this instance, both on the first and on the second floor, and on either side of this, on both floors, another single window of similar form—the well-known acute Gothic



arch, with its ornamental mouldings rising to a pinnacle point in the centre, which is so characteristic and so beautiful a feature of the second style of Venetian architecture. There are some slight vestiges of other ornamentation remaining—one or two bits of half-defaced sculpture in basso-relievo, let into the wall, a fragment or two of the ornamental string-courses so common in Venetian buildings and so conducive to their beauty—but that is all. “Time’s effacing fingers” have stripped from the still solid walls all else that once ornamented them, leaving only enough to show that, small and modest as the dwelling must always have been, beauty had been thought much of by the owner of it.

In the interior there is nothing of any interest whatever. On the ceilings of the commonplace rooms there are, as in all Italian houses, some very ordinary paintings of Cupids, and so forth, the work of some whitewasher within the last fifty years certainly, which were pointed out to me as having been executed by the great man’s own hand! It is fair to say that this information was volunteered to me by a female servant, the only person of the family now inhabiting the house who was then at

home. This family is no longer that of the descendants of the great artist. But it is only quite recently that the property has passed out of their hands.

Here lived and died and laboured—certainly for the last twenty years of his life—*i.e.*, from 1574 to 1594—the man who may be called, with a careful choice of the epithet, the most marvellous genius of all those recorded in the annals of painting. Nobody can feel and know to what a degree this is the truth who has not studied Tintoretto in his native Venice. A similar remark is frequently made with regard to many other painters. But there is no one of whom it is so true as of this extraordinary man. And when a sufficient number of hours have been passed before those of his incredibly numerous works which yet remain to bring this conviction well home to the mind of the student in Venice, it is impossible for him not to feel a curiosity respecting the man himself who created these things, his life and fortunes, and the manner of him and of them. But the search on which he will thus be impelled to enter is a difficult one.

Who has not used and abused Vasari—profited by his garrulity and been provoked

by his inaccuracy? But it is when one gets beyond chattering Giorgio's tether, among the crowd of great names of the Venetian school, that one misses him, and is fully aware of his value, despite his faults. Even his errors, handled by modern criticism and diligence, have turned to profit; and his most inaccurate stories form at least the backbone of a narrative which subsequent labourers have rendered valuable. And when the student of Venetian art-history has to take Ridolfi in hand, instead of gossiping Giorgio, he will find the difference, and miss his old, often abused friend.

Nevertheless, by patiently searching among the various sources of information—obscure, ephemeral *pièces d'occasion* and notices in forgotten periodicals, some of them—to be found in the Venetian libraries, some particulars of the man Jacopo Robusti as he lived and worked may be gathered and put together. Of accounts of *his works*, as distinguished from accounts of *him*, and of criticism on them, there is no lack.

Jacopo Robusti was born in 1512. His father was a dyer. The name by which not only posterity but his own age agreed mainly to know him, Il Tintoretto, has nothing to do with the practice of his own art. It means simply "The Little Dyer."

It may be as well to add that Titian was born in 1477, and died in 1576; Paolo Veronese, born 1538, died 1598 (? 1588); Pordenone, born 1482, died 1540.

Of course, the memory of the reader will immediately recall to his mind many another contemporary name, and the remembrance of them will at once prove that this sixteenth century, and specially the first nine decades of it, was the high tide and culminating time of Venetian art; and the fact will at once suggest itself that politically, socially, and morally, Venice had already passed the culminating point, and was on the decline; and it will not be forgotten that a similar chronological phenomenon may be observed with regard to other schools. The coincidence is very far from being an accidental one, and points to a whole chapter of considerations in the history of social progress, which this, however, is not the place to examine.

We have the usual stories tending to show the irrepressible bent of Tintoretto's mind, while yet a lad in his father's workshop; but we need not devote any space to the detailing of them. It is sufficient to tell that he was wholly friendless, as far as any furtherance in his ambition to become a painter went, and that he was deter-

mined to become one with a determination of that sort—unbending as cold iron, and ardent as molten iron—which rarely fails to accomplish its intent.

At last he succeeded in obtaining permission to frequent the workshop of Titian (thirty-five years his senior) as a pupil. It was great promotion. Titian was then *facile princeps*, caressed by princes, making a rapid fortune, living a gorgeous life, mixing with aristocratic patrons, and sharing their manner of existence. Many pupils attended his studio, and the ambitious dyer's boy strove his utmost to gain the master's eye, and show by proof of his capacity his right to be one of such a company. One day—it was only ten days after his admission to the school, according to a tradition constant in Venice—Titian had been out during the whole morning, the pupils had been variously at work at their appointed tasks, and Tintoretto, having none such, had employed his morning on a series of cartoons, on which he was delighted to see the master's eye rest, as he passed through the workshop to his private room. Titian turned over the drawings, looked at them carefully, said nothing, and passed into his own room.

That same evening came to the expectant lad

a message brought by the master's favourite pupil, one Girolamo Dante—generally known as Girolamo di Tiziano, and now otherwise unknown—to the effect that he must quit the studio! The master wished never to see him there again! Titian had seen in these cartoons, by which the young Tintoretto had sought to gain his approbation, that which he deemed might soon put his own supremacy in question. The tone in which the anecdote, implying so detestable a meanness in such a man as Titian, is told by authors writing about one hundred years afterwards, is one of those constantly-recurring instances which tend to persuade one that truly the world has improved, and reminds one of the old Euripidean sentiment, to the effect that injustice should not be committed, *save* for the sake of empire.

Tintoretto left the great man's studio as commanded—with what feelings at the heart and what shakings of the dust from his feet may be imagined—and *never had any master again*.

But Titian had gone very far astray in his reckoning, when he had hoped that he should so crush the talent which threatened to rival his own. Tintoretto was more than ever determined to succeed, despite all obstacles, and to



owe success to labour and perseverance alone. He laboured literally night and day. He procured casts from the antique, and drew from them in every position and by every sort of light. He studied in various manners, which are mentioned by his historians as if nothing of the sort had been done before. He used to hang up his models to the ceiling, that he might study the position of the limbs in every possible attitude, and draw them by every kind of arrangement of artificial light, that he might master all the effects of light and shade. He studied from dead bodies and from anatomical preparations. Specially he obtained casts of Michael Angelo's figures in the Medicean Chapel at Florence. Nor did the treatment that he had received from Titian in any degree blind him to the unrivalled excellence of that great artist's colouring : for we are told that he inscribed in large letters on the wall of his studio, “The design of Michael Angelo, the colouring of Titian,” as the rule that was to guide his ambition. Modern critics, especially the recent editors of the last excellent Florentine edition of Vasari, have, very unreasonably, as it seems to the present writer, ridiculed the terms of the above expressed aspiration as absurd, as an ignorant attempt to

combine two things incompatible and uncombinable. Of course the phrase is not to be understood with any such hypercritical affectation of accuracy. And surely no fault can be found with an ambition which simply sought to attain the highest excellence in design with the highest excellence in colouring.

To those who have examined the works of Tintoretto as they may be still seen in Venice, it is unnecessary to remark that the gods conceded half his prayer, the other half dispersed in air. Tintoretto did attain to a vigour and mastery of design fully equal to that of Michael Angelo, with a degree of correctness and accuracy far superior to the great Florentine; but he never equalled the colouring of Titian.

It was a very up-hill path that Tintoretto had to tread at the beginning of his career. Not only was Titian in full possession of the unbounded admiration and suffrages of the Venetians, but there were a whole host of Titianesque great names competing for the private favour of the citizens, and the public favour of the Republic. Palma Vecchio, Pordenone, and Bonifaccio were great favourites with the public. And to make matters worse, between him and Titian and the Titianesque school there was

dissension, schism, rivalry, and enmity. But Tintoretto was determined he would succeed. To begin with, all scruples of professional or artistic dignity he threw to the winds. He would work for anybody, and for any terms, if only they would let him work. A new palace was being built. He went to the masons, who were often left to furnish, by contracts between themselves and the painters, the fresco ornamentation of the exterior walls. Ridolfi, writing in 1648, speaks of its having been the custom to paint the houses in Venice in fresco, "some of which paintings still remain." But a very few fragments can yet be found. And the destruction of all these numerous works shows how much more destructive the sea-air of the Queen of the Adriatic has been to such productions than the drier atmosphere of the inland cities of the Peninsula. Tintoretto offered to undertake the work on very low terms. He was told that the owners of the new palace did not intend to go to any cost for external paintings. He at once offered to paint the whole house for nothing save the cost of the colours! And on these terms he was permitted to do so! Never mind! At least all Venice would see his work! He painted portraits of himself and his brother,

and exhibited them in the *Merceria*, the most public and busiest street of the city. He proposed to the Prior of the Convent of La Madonna dell'Orto to paint the two enormous pictures, one of the Adoration of the Golden Calf, the other of the Portents preceding the Last Judgment, for the walls of the principal chapel, where they are now seen. The Prior laughed at him, telling him that the entire revenues of the convent for several years would not suffice to pay for the work. Tintoretto on the spot offered to paint the pictures for the cost of the paint alone! It was impossible to refuse such an offer, and the two wonderful pictures were painted. For anybody who would employ him, he would paint for little, if more was not to be had; for nothing, if nothing was to be got.

And the works painted on those terms were by this time talked about all over Venice; and it may be easily imagined that the excellence, which his rivals were unable to deny, was not rendered more tolerable to them by the conditions on which this irrepressible young man was wont to produce them. He was abusing the dignity of art! He was destroying the market! He was ruining the profession! Nevertheless, they thronged to look at his

work, and even Titian found himself unable to withhold his praise and approbation.

For, in truth, such works had never been seen before. Here is what Vasari says of him—not in any biography of the great Venetian which the Tuscan biographer has unfortunately not written, but incidentally in the life of Battista Franco. "He was," says Giorgio, "an amiable man enough in all his actions; *but* in matters of art he was extravagant, capricious, quick and free in execution, and *the most terrible brain that the art of painting ever had!* He treats his subjects quite in a different way from other painters. He has outdone extravagance itself with the new and fantastic inventions and strange whims of his intellect. He seems to work at hap-hazard and without plan, as if to show that he considered painting a mere jest. He does now," adds Giorgio, writing at the time of his highest celebrity, "most of the pictures that are painted in Venice."

A terrible brain indeed! This—the *terrible* potency of creative imagination, the unrestrained welling forth of the seething fancies that were poured out from it—is what distinguishes Tintoretto from any other that ever handled brush. And to this must be added an almost

equally wonderful and probably matchless facility and mastery in throwing on the canvas those thronging fancies in perfectly faultless drawing. This, let the matter be as difficult as it might—and Tintoretto is always seeking difficulties in order to show his power of conquering them—he accomplished with a certainty, a rapid freedom, and large dash of hand, that could only have been acquired by years of patient and unremitting toil.

But this same facility was Tintoretto's great snare. The fault-finding Mengs, whose criticism, in this case at least, abundantly testifies to his own incompetency and smallness of intelligence, says that the Venetian school generally makes great vaunt of quickness, and for that reason esteems Tintoretto, *whose only merit is quickness!* He would have been nearer the truth if he had said that it was his *only fault*; for the accusation of hurried execution is one against which Tintoretto's fanatical admirers in vain attempt to defend him. The truth is he not only painted far too rapidly to give his pictures a hope of durability, but he is answerable for leading a host of smaller imitators into the same mistaken path.

It must be rightly understood, however, what



is the nature of the evil resulting from Tintoretto's phenomenal rapidity. His wealth of imagination and power of hand were such, that it may well be doubted whether, *for his contemporaries*, his pictures were any the worse for the speed with which they were executed. *We* are the sufferers. His method of execution was fatal to the durability of his works. He found that certain dark-coloured preparations and foundations for his pictures would dry with much greater rapidity than the light-coloured preparations which had previously been used by his contemporaries and predecessors. The temptation was too great a one for him to resist; and thus he was led into becoming what Italian critics and art historians do not hesitate to admit that he was, the father and beginner of the unhappy school of the "tenebrosi"—all that rapidly-deteriorating crowd of *siecentisti*, whose black pictures would probably be but little better worth if they were not black.

Yet enough of Tintoretto's work remains to show what his colouring could be (and could remain) when he chose to give his creations a fair chance. There is the "Miracle of St. Mark," now in the gallery of the Belle Arti at Venice. This picture was painted for the con-

fraternity of St. Mark, one of those wealthy societies established for purposes of devotion and beneficence, of which there were so many at Venice, and which, in the decoration of their halls and places of meeting, were among the most efficient and important patrons of art in the city.

Efficient patrons of art, however, as the confraternities were in one sense, the confraternity of St. Mark was, at all events on that occasion, not a very discerning patron: for a difference of opinion arose among the members as to whether they should keep the picture. Now this picture, one of the great glories of the Venice gallery, is by all but universal consent the finest work now extant of the painter, and one of the perhaps half-dozen finest pictures in the world. And it is remarkable that Tintoretto's conduct respecting it, on the occasion above referred to, seems to have indicated some consciousness of the superlative excellence of this among his other works. There was none of the eagerness to dispose of his work that characterized him on so many other occasions—no abating of price—no offer of it on any terms they chose to give him. On the first word of objection and doubt, he packs up his picture,

and carries it off to his own house. That prompt action brought the confraternity quickly to their senses. They were willing to take the picture. Aye, very possibly; but it was not so certain that they could now have it. In short, the artist made them beg hard before he would restore the insulted *chef d'œuvre* to the repentant brethren. However, they ate their humble pie, the picture was placed in their hall, and Tintoretto afterwards painted three other pictures for them.

It may be as well to observe respecting this great work, that the qualifying words, "*all but universal*," in the last paragraph, are due to the dissentient voice of a critic whose opinion cannot be neglected or pooh-poohed. Mr. Ruskin thinks that the "Miracle of St. Mark" is by no means Tintoretto's finest picture. *Valeat quantum*. The present writer has not the smallest intention of opposing his own very worthless opinion on such a subject to that of such a man as Mr. Ruskin. He contents himself with stating the fact that many generations of art critics and lovers of art have thought differently. Possibly the excellent habit of mind which Mr. Ruskin has acquired by the lifelong practice of forming opinions on funda-

mental principles, wholly independent of the popular notions and popular voice on such subjects, and the very frequent cases in which he has had occasion to find such notions and such voice worthless, may have superinduced an undue tendency to oppose the opinion of the vulgar *quand même*.

Tintoretto may now be pretty well said to have had the ball at his feet. But the grand object of the ambition of every Venetian artist in that day of the meridian splendour of Venetian art was to be employed in the service of the Republic, and to have a share in the great work, then going on, of adorning the matchless halls of the ducal palace. But the star of Titian was in the ascendant, and specially so with the patricians of Venice.

New paintings were required for the Sala del Consiglio. The works of Gentile da Fabriano, Vivarini, and Guaviento which adorned its walls no longer contented the eyes of a generation which had learned to appreciate better things. Gentile Bellini, Giovanni Bellini, Titian himself, and others of the Titianesque school, were entrusted with this unrivalled field for the display of their powers. Titian was also empowered to appoint the painters to whom the

vaults of the Library of St. Mark were to be entrusted. He gave them to Schiavoni, P. Veronese, Zelotti, Salviati, and Franco, to the exclusion of Tintoretto. But when there was room for such artists as some of the above, such exclusion was too marked by feelings of jealousy, and Tintoretto obtained permission from the Procuratori to paint some isolated figures of philosophers on some unappropriated wall-spaces. Thereupon he produced a Diogenes so marvellous, that spaces were found for him in the Sala del Consiglio for the treatment of two subjects that were allotted to him—“Frederick Barbarossa crowned by Pope Adrian,” and the subsequent excommunication of the same emperor. The latter especially was a very grand subject, and must have called out all his wonderful powers. He was also employed to paint an immense “Last Judgment” in the Sala del Scrutinio.

But all these works perished in the fatal fire which did such irreparable damage in 1577—the sixty-fifth of the painter’s life.

Any attempt to notice all, or even the principal works of Tintoretto which yet remain in Venice would need a volume rather than an article; but it is impossible to refrain from

mentioning the circumstances under which the great work of adorning the halls of the confraternity of St. Rocco was entrusted to him.

In 1488 the great and wealthy confraternity of St. Rocco built their new rooms—those magnificent halls which are still admired for their architecture, and yet more for the truly wonderful series of paintings by Tintoretto which still covers their walls. But it was not till 1560 that the society determined on proceeding to the work of adorning their new building with paintings. It was determined to invite the leading artists of the day to compete for the work by the exhibition of cartoons for certain of the wall spaces to be covered. Paolo Veronese, Salviati, Schiavoni, and others, were among the competitors. A day was appointed for the exhibition of their designs in the great hall of the confraternity. The rivals showed their cartoons. Tintoretto had apparently brought none with him. But when the judges turned to him, he suddenly pulled away a sheet which had hung against the wall unnoticed, and pointed not to a cartoon, but to a finished picture already placed in its framing in the destined place! Those assembled could not believe their eyes. His rivals were the most astonished, and could



not forbear their praises of his work. It was the picture, still to be seen there, of “The Reception of St. Rocco in heaven by the Heavenly Father.” The thing seemed impossible—the work of magic! In the few days allowed for the preparation of a cartoon sketch he had produced a finished picture! Some of the members of the confraternity, however, when their first astonishment had a little subsided, thinking more of their own dignity than of purely artistic considerations, began to show themselves offended at the unauthorized liberty the artist had taken in placing his work in their hall without having received any commission to do so. Tintoretto cut them short by telling them that it was his offering to the saint, and by citing their statutes to the effect that no such present could be refused! The upshot was that the whole of the paintings (twenty-eight enormous pictures!) were entrusted to him, and that he was to be paid for the work by an annual stipend of an hundred ducats for life. He soon (too soon) completed the Herculean task, and lived to draw his pension for thirty-four years. “The Crucifixion,” a colossal picture, much larger than any of the others, occupying the entire wall of one noble hall, is perhaps

second only to the “Miracle of St. Mark” in the catalogue of his works. *But*, alas! the whole of this wonderful series—“The Crucifixion” least of all of them—show but too clearly the result of his extraordinary, his incredible rapidity. It is not that the design of the pictures could have been better or the drawing more correct if he had meditated them for years, and laboured at them as long. The mastery of his hand seems to have been unerring, and the prolific teeming of his imagination absolutely inexhaustible. The amount of invention, of creation, exhibited in each of his larger works can hardly be imagined save by those who have seen them, and given themselves time to *see* them in reality. But it was the mechanical shifts to which he was driven by the material necessities of such headlong speed that have been fatal to the durability of his pictures. And the present condition of the whole of the miraculous St. Rocco series declares but too plainly that the Venetian critics, who accuse him of being the founder of the school of the “tenebrosi,” cannot be said to do him wrong.

Then, in 1571—just six years, alas! before the terrible fire at the ducal palace—the Venetians won their great victory over the Turks,

and determined to celebrate it and commemorate it in the artistic manner so especially Venetian. Tintoretto and Salviati were commissioned to execute a great painting in the Sala del Scrutinio. This time it is Tintoretto who is primarily applied to. But the proposed partnership was very distasteful to him. He went to the Procuratori and made a proposition. If the Republic would trust the entire work to him alone, he would paint the picture in one year (full as his hands were with other work), would ask no penny of pay from the coffers of the State, and would engage to take his picture down again and carry it away, if any other painter could be found to execute the work in two years for *any* payment! Of course, such terms could but be accepted; and the mortification and rage of the old man Titian (then in his ninety-fourth year) were very great, says Ridolfi; for he hated Tintoretto.

The latter, now in his fifty-ninth year, was still working with incredible rapidity, inexhaustible fertility, and unwearied industry on a crowd of works, great and small, public and private. His appetite for work seems to have been insatiable. Had it been proposed to paint every yard of sail-cloth on the galleys of the

Republic, he would doubtless have undertaken the job single-handed. Yet it cannot be supposed that avarice was the motive that impelled him. Nor is any authority to be found to justify the statement in the "*Biographie Universelle*" that he was driven by the avarice of his wife.\* It is impossible to suppose that a man whose dealings were such as we have seen them to be could have been eager for money. No; he was greatly ambitious of linking his name for ever with the fame, the splendour, the glory of his native city. And especially he was driven by the necessity, analogous to that which makes the boiler burst if there be no outlet for continually generated steam, to find expression for the incompressible well-head of his imagination. This, above all, is the quality which distinguishes him from all other painters of every age and clime.

We can permit ourselves to speak of but one other work, the last of his colossal canvases,

\* Unless the biographer is unreasonable enough to find it in a jocosé statement to the effect that his wife used to tie up his money in the corner of his handkerchief when he went out; but he always spent it one way or another, and always told her when asked for an account at his return, that he had spent it all in pious works. All evidently a joke, if not a very brilliant one.

and the most colossal of them all—the work of his old age—the “Paradiso,” which occupies the entire wall of the Sala del Gran Consiglio, painted after the fire which destroyed his and other previous works in the same hall. This is the largest picture known. It is thirty feet high by seventy-four feet long! Perhaps it may be doubted whether such a subject, so treated, was a fitting subject for painting. At all events, it must be admitted that no unity of impression can be produced on the mind of the beholder. But, here again, as always, a detailed examination of the work reveals, to the always fresh astonishment of the examiner, the truly inexhaustible wealth of his imaginative power. Still the old man, as in the fresh spring-tide of his youth, pours forth new creations of combination, of movement, of beauty, and of expression, with a profusion that knows no limit save that of his almost unlimited canvas!

“IL FULMINE DELLA PITTURA,” indeed! A thunderbolt among painters!

In one of those lovely corridors of the ducal palace there are two marble busts, side by side: those of Titian and of Tintoretto. One is inscribed “Il Principe” and the other “Il Fulmine” of Painting. And truly the designations

are in either case appropriate ! To what degree the busts may be accepted as veritable presentments of the men we are not aware ; but there is no doubt that, as given in the marble, “The Thunderbolt” is by far a nobler head than “The Prince.”



## CHAPTER II.

IT is impossible for a sojourner in Venice to have spent hours in front of those colossal canvases of Tintoretto—some portion of whose history has been recounted in the previous chapter—hours which have gradually brought him into something like personal acquaintance with that wonderful man, without longing for some details of the sort of life passed by him in that small but not inelegant dwelling, which, as has already been pointed out, may still be discovered by the curious in a distant and out-of-the-way quarter of the strangely beautiful sea city.

But little can be found to gratify this desire, though some fragments may be gathered by a careful searcher for them. And, as this gathering has never yet been done, so far as the present writer is aware, and as any English inquirer is little likely to have the time and means

needed for doing it for himself, it may perhaps be not unacceptable that it should be done for him here.

The house in which the painter passed the latter years of his life, and in which he died, has been already described, and its whereabouts indicated. The contract of purchase, bearing date the 8th of June, 1574 — executed by Pietro Episcopi, his father-in-law, on his behalf—is still extant. There is also extant a return made by him of his property for the purpose of taxation, in which the rent of the house is stated at twenty ducats a month, subject to deduction on account of a mortgage to the amount of five hundred ducats, bearing interest at six per cent., due to the person from whom the property was bought. The above estimate of the value of the house at twenty ducats a month is a startling one. The ducat was about equal to ten shillings, and it is generally held that the nominal value of money at the beginning of the sixteenth century must be multiplied at least by ten, in order to find its worth in the nominal value of our own day. And thus calculating it, we should have the rent of Tintoretto's small house stated at £1200 a year in our present money—which is, of course,

utterly out of the question. It is true that the return states the rent at twenty ducats, without any such word as "monthly" or "annually." And if, as to our notions would seem a matter of course, the *annual* value were intended, the rent of the house would have been equivalent to £100 of our money, which is quite as much as one would have supposed. But there is this difficulty: how could a mortgage, the annual interest of which was thirty ducats, be secured on a property the annual rent of which was twenty ducats? And that in a country where mortgages are never permitted to approach so nearly to the limit of the value of the property mortgaged as they often do with us. It is clear that this could not be. In my difficulty on the subject I carried the passage of the return to my friend Signor Velludo, the able and always obliging librarian of St. Mark's library. And he at once declared that the twenty ducats named in the return must be understood to be the monthly value, and that such a manner of speaking was quite in accordance with Venetian habitudes. Still it is totally impossible to suppose that the small house in question, in a distant quarter of Venice, was worth the equivalent of £1200 a year! And we can only come

to the conclusion, either that the return was a fictitious one, or that whatever may have been the case in other communities where money was scarcer, the rule of multiplying nominal amounts of the sixteenth century by ten, in order to find the equivalent value in the money of our own day, must be wholly fallacious as regards the wealthy commercial city of Venice. Nevertheless, the former explanation seems to be the more probable one. And other facts relative to the methods in use at that period for rating property for the purpose of taxation seem to show that such is likely to have been the case. I believe upon the whole that the value of the house stated at twenty ducats was meant to be the yearly value; but that that sum was *very* far below the real value, probably to the extent of being only a third part of it. And it is to be observed that this under-valuation could not have been at all events altogether fraudulent, inasmuch as the return contains on the face of it the statement that a mortgage of which the annual interest was thirty ducats was secured on the property. We must conclude, therefore, that it was systematical and recognized that the return for rating was in all cases very much below the real value.

Tintoretto returns himself as the possessor also of a small farm situated in the immediate neighbourhood of Mestre, of which the produce (payable from the farmer to the landlord) was seventeen quarters of wheat and fourteen tuns of wine, and as *honoraries* due from the farmer according to custom, one goose, fifty eggs, two pairs of hens, two pairs of chickens, and one ham. On this farm there was also a mortgage of four hundred ducats at six per cent.

Tintoretto left his property to his wife for her life, and then to his children generally, with, as it should seem, certain powers of appointment by the widow. The painter had two sons, Domenico and Marco, and five daughters, Marietta, two named Ottavia, Perinna, and Laura. Domenico, well-known as a more than respectable artist, who worked with and assisted his father in several of his later works, especially in the great "Paradiso," in the *Sala del Maggiore Consiglio*, eventually became the owner and occupier of the house in Venice. Marco seems to have been a ne'er-do-weel. And his mother exercised in respect to him the right of "conditioning"—as the phrase in her will has it—his share of his father's property. He is left, in fact, in a sort of tutelage to the discretion of his

brother Domenico. Nothing further is heard of him.

Marietta, whom we shall have occasion to return to again, died before her father, in 1590, at the age of thirty. She was married to one Mario Augusta, a jeweller (reckoned in those days as much entitled to rank as an *artist* as a painter), but she does not seem to have left any offspring.

Perinna and one of the Ottavias became nuns in the convent of St. Ann, in Venice. They are by the widow's will recommended to the care of their brother Domenico. These two poor women piously worked in silk embroidery a copy of their father's great picture of the Crucifixion, at St. Rocco, for an altar-covering for the chapel of their convent. And there remained a constant tradition among the sisterhood that one of them became blind (as may well be believed) from labouring in that truly tremendous task. Zabeo saw this embroidery in 1813. Of Laura nothing is known save that she survived—but probably not for many years—her father and her mother.

The other Ottavia was married to a German painter of the name of Casser; and she became ultimately the possessor of the family property.



Domenico had intended to bequeath the house in which his father had lived and laboured, together with the large, and at that day important, collection of casts from the antique and from the works of Michael Angelo, as an academy for the painters of Venice. But he was led to change his mind, and by will, dated 20th of October, 1630, left the entire property to his sister Ottavia, the wife of Sebastian Casser. Domenico died in 1637. Ottavia outlived all her brothers and sisters, and by a will, dated 8th October, 1645, bequeathed everything to her husband. And by their lineal descendants the house was possessed and inhabited up to the year 1835, and a year or two longer. In that year it was occupied by two brothers, Angelo and Andrea Casser. But very shortly afterwards it passed to persons of another name and family. It would seem, however, either that Sebastian Casser, the German painter, had relatives of the same name settled in Venice in the fifteenth century, or that there are still many descendants of Tintoretto living. For Casser is at the present day by no means an uncommon name in Venice.

The long room at the top of the house, which tradition declares to have been the studio of the painter, is still pointed out, though the great

changes which the interior of the house has evidently undergone render one rather sceptical as to any very accurate certainty on this subject. We hear much from the contemporaries of the great painter, or more immediately from those who came after them in the succeeding generation, of the solitariness of Tintoretto's habits in his studio, of the jealousy with which he excluded visitors, and of the secrecy he maintained with respect to the processes used by him. All this was entirely in accordance with the common notions and practices of that day, not only as regarded the art of painting, but as regarded every other art and even handicraft. It was an age when artisans and artists *had* to discover processes and methods for themselves; and when they had succeeded in doing so, it is intelligible that they should have been anxious to reap the whole advantage of their discoveries. And, of course, the next thing that occurred in natural sequence was that an immense amount of humbug mixed itself up with the matter. Tintoretto *did* employ novel processes—unfortunately, as has been explained in the former chapter—and they were processes (adopted with a view to increased speed in execution) which he may well have been unwilling that others should spy the secret

of. It were to be wished much that the secret had remained one, and had died with him! We should not then have been vexed by all the black canvases of the school of the *tenebrosi*! The genius, the creative imagination, the power that *did* die with him, no spying into the secrets of his workshop could have made the spyers any the better for.

And, after all, Tintoretto may have had abundance of other reasons than jealousy of his secrets to make a stern rule against intrusion beyond the sacred threshold of his studio. He was wont to spend many hours there, even when not at work, in solitary meditation. And many anecdotes were current which show that he could ill brook the importunity of blockheads, when his mind and fancy were busy with the work of creation. When he was painting the great picture of the "Paradiso," a work which could not be executed in any ordinary studio, it was impossible to prevent, at all events, the senators of the Republic coming to look at the progress of the work. Upon one occasion a knot of these grandees, after watching him at work for a while, ventured to ask why he made such large sweeps of the brush, when it was well known that Titian, Bellini, etc., had

been content to work with comparatively minute touches. "It must be," said the over-taxed artist, looking up from his work into the face of his persecutors, "because those lucky fellows had not so many visitors to drive them nearly out of their senses!"

Nevertheless, the elegant little home at the foot of the Ponte de' Mori was by no means a cheerless or dull abode. The life within it offered a very striking and favourable contrast to that which might have been observed in the home that poor unhappy Andrea del Sarto made for himself. Tintoretto's home life was essentially, we learn from Ridolfi, and may glean from other sources, a sober, dignified, and staid one. It was an age when cakes and ale were abundant, especially at Venice—an age of license and much riotous living. But from all such roistering Tintoretto held himself entirely aloof. But none the less, as has been said, were there happy home hours of genial intercourse and cheerful pleasure in Tintoretto's home. Music formed a leading feature of those pleasant hours. The old man was himself a performer, and had invented sundry improvements in various instruments.

But doubtless the great centre of attraction

and the animating soul of those happy evenings was the painter's gifted daughter Marietta. Marietta was born in 1560, and was therefore fourteen years old when the house at the foot of the Ponte de' Mori was purchased. And sixteen years after that purchase she died, as we know, a wife. But it would seem that, notwithstanding her marriage, she remained an inmate of her father's house. There are many indications of her having been, at all events, an habitual frequenter of it, and we know that she died in it.

Laura, also, was doubtless an inmate of her father's house, and a member of the pleasant society to be found there. Ottavia, the German artist's wife, was naturally often there with her husband. The two other daughters—the two poor nuns—were of course in their convent.

But Marietta was, as has been said, the soul and leading spirit of the artistic gathering in her father's house. How great a promise she had already given in her father's art—nay, how much she had already achieved—when snatched away by an early death, is well known to all students of the history of art. But Marietta was also highly gifted as a musician. She was a player on the lute, and on the *gravicembali*. Giulio Zacchino, a Neapolitan, had been her

master in music. But a musician of much higher name than he was an habitual frequenter of the musical evenings at Tintoretto's house. This was Giuseppe Zarlino, of Chioggia, who from 1565 to 1590 was chapel-master at St. Mark's. Zarlino, in the language of those who insist upon carrying the idea of a “renaissance” into every department of human culture, is reckoned among the great *restorers* of music. It is not very easy to see what there was to *restore*. And perhaps it would be more to the purpose to say that he was one of the fathers and creators of modern music.

But, be this as it may, there was the old chapel-master to be found enjoying probably some of the happiest hours of his life. Another noted judge and lover of good music who frequented these pleasant gatherings was the painter Jacopo da Ponte, more generally known by the nickname Bassano; for he and Tintoretto were excellent good friends, despite the skits that the mighty idealist would sometimes indulge in at the expense of his friend's realism. “You had better go to Bassano!” he said once to a silly fellow who came to him to have his portrait painted, saying, “I am a fool, you know—*una bestia*—and you must paint me as one!”



“Oh! una bestia, are you? Well in that case you had better go to Bassano; he will paint you to the very life!” And the blockhead went away with this recommendation to Bassano. But Bassano came none the less for his feast of music to the house of his old rival and friend.

Alexandro Vittoria, the sculptor, whose works may still be seen almost in every parish of Venice, was a frequent visitor. The sculptor was a great lover of gardening, and would come fresh from his garden in the Calle di Pieta, where he had been at work for an evening hour or two. And there were two other guests of the house who must not be left unmentioned, if only for the strange contrast they presented to each other—a contrast so violent that the sense of it would not unfrequently deter one of the two from presenting himself in Tintoretto’s well-ordered home.

Every sort of propriety requires that in mentioning this contrasted pair the precedence should be given to the magnificent Paolo Cagliari, better known, at least in England, as Paolo Veronese. The man in this case answers very accurately to the ideas that might be formed of him from his pictures. He was in every point of view magnificent; yet he was withal a

thrifty man, and far more eager about the money value of his works than was our Tintoretto. He, too, was a man of a great and gorgeous imagination; but he was not lavishly prodigal of this creative wealth, as was Tintoretto, nor was his wealth of imagination of the same kind. Gorgeous palaces, with vast distances of colonnaded perspectives, the bravery of courts, cloth of silver and cloth of gold, satins, brocades, pearls and jewels, and splendour of all kinds, seem to have formed the world in which his imagination best loved to expatiate. Would his imagination have ever been excited to creative activity at all, if he had been placed in circumstances where none of these things had been accessible to him? It may, perhaps, be doubted. Would any combination of exterior circumstances have availed to quench the fire of creative faculty in the other? There can hardly be any doubt as to the fitting reply. There had at one time been a feeling of no slight rivalry between Tintoretto and the younger aspirant, who was taking the suffrages of the Venetians by storm, whose tastes and idiosyncrasies were so curiously analogous to his own. Paul Veronese was twenty-six years younger than Tintoretto; and he had shot up

into a reputation and position of the first order with much greater rapidity than Tintoretto had done. There had been wherewithal to excite jealousy ; but it is pleasant to think that nothing had ever passed between them which prevented the younger man frequenting the house of the elder as a guest.

Paolo, we are told, especially affected splendour of attire. It is specially mentioned that he always wore velvet breeches. His manners, too, were courtly and magnificent. Perhaps it may be allowable to conjecture that the liveliest and pleasantest evenings in the house at the foot of the Ponte de' Mori were not those when the gorgeous Paolo honoured the assembly with his presence.

At all events, there was one who sometimes ventured to count so far on the tolerance of fellow artists towards a brother of the brush of undeniable talent and merit as to show himself half-shamefacedly in the circle at Tintoretto's house, but who could never dare to do so if he knew that the magnificent Paolo, with his velvet breeches, was to be present. This was poor Andrea Schiavoni, a veritable Bohemian of the Bohemians. How could the magnificence of velvet breeches assort with

raggedness which sometimes approached the point of having none at all! What sort of society could there be between the frequenter of the lordliest palaces of Venice, the caressed associate of proud patricians and noble dames, and the poor Bohemian, reeking from the society of a miserable pot-house? I do not find any special delinquencies charged against this unfortunate Andrea Schiavoni as the cause of the miserable life he led. And assuredly his talent was of a quality that ought to have secured to him a comfortable maintenance and an honourable position in society. But have we not all, alas! known men who seem inevitably predestined to be and to remain to the bitter end poor devils? Andrea Schiavoni was one of these, incurably from his cradle to his grave a poor devil! He was never seen otherwise than ragged, patched, dirty, and disreputable-looking. Sometimes he was on the verge of starvation. His pictures were ill-paid—not in proportion to their merit, but in proportion to his recognised position as a poor devil. Nevertheless, the poor devil liked, when he could achieve some comparative degree of decency, and when he knew that Veronese the magnificent with his too imposing velvet breeches was

not to be there, to find, as an oasis in his troubled life, a few hours of tranquil enjoyment beneath the hospitable roof of Tintoretto. The dreaded presence of the superb Paolo would doubtless be indicated by his gondola moored under the wall of the canal, and waiting for its master in front of Tintoretto's house. Of course, Veronese came in his gondola. Perhaps also the old chapel-master came in his. The others would more probably walk. Certainly Alexandro, the sculptor, came afoot from his garden in the Calle di Pietà. The small hours, doubtless, had begun to be chimed from the neighbouring convent of the Madonna dell' Orto before the party separated. Hours were always late in Venice (as they are to the present day), the old Venetian life having been curiously and characteristically contrasted in this respect with the life in thrifty, save-all Florence.

What a pity it is that the old chroniclers and biographers and letter-writers did not tell us a few more of the things we should so much like to be told, in the place of the masses of fact that do not interest us at all. At all events, our posterity can make no such complaint of us. For, not knowing exactly what may most interest them, we leave everything

on record for their curiosity. The pleasant little picture of these *noctes cœnæque deûm* in the house at the foot of the Ponte de' Mori is a glimpse, a fleeting peep into the phantasmagoric lantern of the past, constructed out of mere words dropped here and there by chance, slight indications which fell from the writer's pen when he was intent on recording far other matters, and rendered possible only by assiduous and careful gleaning and piecing together, eked out by somewhat of guess-work. But we know at least what sort of moonlight it was—at least we who have "swum in a gondola" on the moonlit lagoon know—what a moonlight it was that lighted the little party home, and poured its flood of silver on the white Istrian marble of the canal front of the old artist's house. The three-arched Gothic windows of the large saloon had, no doubt, all its three casements opened to the sweet night air, and was garnished each by a gracious head, as the daughters of the host bade their guests "Good-night!" Old Giuseppe Zarlino, the chapel-master, I think, offered a place in his gondola to Ser Jacopo da Ponte as a recognised lover and *intendente di musica*. Schiavoni slunk off alone, turning as quickly as might be into some



narrow *calle* that hid him from the too-peering moonlight.

"What think you, Messer Giuseppe, of our old friend's scheme for adding to the sonority of the mandoline?" says Bassano, as he takes his place by the side of the old *maestro* in the gondola.

"Hum!" returns the old man doubtfully, "there is not much in it, *mi pare*, one way or the other! It may be an improvement on the old form. But I have reached a time of life, *Jacopo mio*, when one thinks more of old practice than of new-fangled inventions."

"But did not La Marietta give us that last *toccata* in a manner that was perfectly heavenly; such a grace of touch, such an expression! I could not help thinking of one of those angels of old Bellini in the chapel at the Frari, as I looked at her and listened to her!"

"Aye, indeed you may say so! Marietta is a Phoenix, *rara avis in terris*—in truth, a non-such!" replies the old chapel-master with enthusiasm. "I expect great things from Marietta; and you, *Jacopo mio*, must expect great things too; you in your art and I in mine. I don't know another case of such a mastery as Marietta Robusti has in both arts at once."

There was many a competent authority in

Venice then who expected great things from Marietta. But, alas! all such expectations were fated to be disappointed; and the last of those pleasant evenings in the little house at the foot of the Ponte de' Mori was at hand. Marietta Robusti was doomed, as the reader already knows, to an early death. She fell into ill-health and died at the age of thirty, in 1590, just four years before the death of her bereaved old father. But before she died there occurred in that house one of the most moving and saddest scenes that its walls can ever have been witnesses to in all the four or five centuries of its existence. On her death-bed, when it became certain that her life would not be spared, the despairing father determined to possess such a portrait of his daughter as his all but octogenarian hand could still well execute. And the old man painted the portrait of his gifted child, with whom so many hopes were extinguished, as she lay there dying. Surely never was so sad a picture painted.

Marietta was buried in the noble church of the neighbouring monastery of Madonna dell' Orto, where, after the lapse of four more years, her father rejoined her. They were buried in the vault belonging to the Episcopi family, to

which Tintoretto's wife belonged, which was under the choir. The church, which had fallen so much into decay that it was threatened with complete ruin, has recently been restored, not injudiciously nor unsuccessfully, at the cost of the Italian Government. The works are not yet quite completed, but when they are, they will include a fitting monument to the extraordinary man whose dust rests between the two wonderful pictures with which the first youthful ardour of his genius covered the huge side walls of the choir that was to receive his remains when his matchless career should have been run.

GOLDONI.



## GOLDONI:

AND LIFE IN ITALY A HUNDRED AND  
TWENTY YEARS SINCE.

ONE of the most curious of the diversities which constitute national character is that which causes the change that all societies undergo by lapse of time to be more marked among one people in one department of their lives, and among their neighbours in a different department. That human life in some of its phases is stagnant, and scarcely moves or changes at all, we know; and that the rapidity of its movement is proportioned to the degree of civilization which it has attained, we are disposed—thus far, at least, in the world's history—to believe. We are accordingly, and not unreasonably, wont to assume that the last hundred years has seen greater changes in our own social condition



than in that of any other nation. Italy, on the other hand, as all the rest of Europe asserts, and as she herself admits, has lagged sadly during these latter centuries in the rear of the general progress of the civilized world. And in accordance with the above-stated notions, we are apt to figure to ourselves—the striking changes of the last few years apart—that Italy is a very unchanged country; that social ways and customs and the habits of life are very much what they were a few generations ago; or, at least, that they are more like what they were then than would be found to be the case elsewhere. Nevertheless, the fact is that the general shape and manner of life—more especially of that portion of the national life which belongs to what is usually called “society,” in the more restricted sense of the term—has been fully as much altered during the last century, or century and a half, in Italy, as in any other part of Europe.

But the change shows itself to the south of the Alps most markedly in a different part of the vast and varied field of human life from that in which it is mainly to be noticed among ourselves. There the changes to be noticed are changes of external habit;—with us they are

changes in internal modes of thought. With us men think on all the most important subjects of life and human conduct very differently from what they used to think a hundred years or so ago. In Italy, on most of these subjects, men think much as they did in the eighteenth century. At first sight it may seem, perhaps, that this assertion is not in accordance with sundry notorious facts in recent Italian history. The utterance of opinions on matters political and religious which were never, or scarcely ever, heard in former days, may be heard loudly enough now on every side. But in the first place the non-utterance of opinions was in the old days no proof of their non-existence; and in the second place, the opinions professed by a man on the subjects which most prominently occupy the national talk may, experience teaches us, vary very considerably without necessarily implying any great real change in the national mind. In the habits of thought and ways of looking at things, and in those unconscious modifications of the mind which are sucked in, so to speak, with the mother's milk, which lie deeper down in the mind than the opinions which a man forms consciously to himself, and which underlie the processes by

which he sets about forming what he calls his opinions—in all this the national mind of Italy is little changed.

That the English mind has in these respects become changed radically and profoundly, few Englishmen, probably, would be found to doubt.

The same difference between the two natures has manifested itself throughout the course of history. The detailed exposition of this would be a subject for a volume—and not a bad one. But the most striking instances of the fact may be recalled to the reader of history in a very few words. How profoundly Christianity changed us English, we all know. How little it changed the Italians, those know who are acquainted with Italian manners and Italian history. How deeply and efficiently the Reformation modified us again, we all know. How lightly and inefficiently it touched Italy is also matter of historical commonplace. The far-reaching consequences of the great up-heaving of the last quarter of the last century are still producing profound modifications of even national character among us, who were not primarily affected by the great earthquake. Italy, which was materially knocked to pieces and turned over and over by it, continued after

the storm to think and feel, in all those matters which really go to the making of national character, much as she thought and felt before.

Very interesting and far-reaching speculations might be based on these phenomena, as to the invariability of human species, and as to the future prospects and destinies of different sections of the European family. But leaving speculation to the thoughtful reader, it is our present purpose, having thus briefly indicated to him the amusement he may find from the comparisons we have referred to, merely to place before him a picture of the social changes which have come over Italy and Italian life since the middle of the eighteenth century. And it would be difficult to find, or even to imagine, a better text-book for this purpose than the autobiography of the man whose name we have placed at the head of this paper.

Carlo Goldoni was born at Venice in 1707. His father, a physician of some reputation, was the son of a Modenese, settled at Venice, in the service of the Republic. Carlo, after some hesitations and changes of purpose, took his degree of doctor of law at the University of Padua, as the necessary preliminary for practising as an advocate at Venice. He commenced his

career at the Venetian bar under favourable auspices, and seemed to be making his way fairly. But old temptations and preferences assailed, and got the better of him, and he deserted his “studio”—his chambers, as we should say—to become a writer for the theatre. Finding himself at Pisa, after some years of adventures, friends there persuaded him to open a “studio,” and seek for employment as an advocate in that city. His Paduan degree made him competent to do so. Here again his success as a barrister was considerable. He quickly had as much business as he could do. But once again a company of players and an enterprising “impresario” crossed his path, and tempted him; so, shutting up his “studio,” he said good-bye to Pisa, and once more returned for good and all to his veritable calling of a dramatic author. His works, published in 1821, at Prato, in thirty volumes, contain a hundred and twenty dramas, some in the Venetian dialect, some in Italian, some in prose, and some in verse. He really produced, however, many more, probably altogether about two hundred. In the year 1761, the fifty-fourth of his age, he went to Paris, where he passed the remainder of his life; and in his eightieth year published his

autobiography, added in three volumes to the Prato edition of his works.

This story of his life has all the charm which such narratives rarely fail to possess, when they have in so eminent a degree as these memoirs of Goldoni the qualities of unaffected simplicity and evident truthfulness. They are too long by more than half. Doubtless they were not too long for the day in which they were written. They had a great success, and the memory of them is yet fresh among the lovers of such books. But they are too long for the present generation. People are too busy, and have too much to cram into their lives to spare the time to read three volumes of memoirs of Goldoni. Possibly, however, the reader may be induced to give a few minutes to such an account of Goldoni and his day in Italy as can be put into the compass of a few pages.

The death in 1712 of his grandfather, who had held a lucrative position under the Venetian government, and who had kept up a very handsome establishment, inhabiting a villa six leagues from Venice, lent to him by the Duke of Massa, where he had constantly dramatic and operatic artists in his pay, and received habitually all the gayest and most brilliant society of the capital,



made a great change in the position of his family. The pleasure-loving old gentleman seems to have left his affairs in great disorder. The family were reduced to "the most embarrassing straits," and "to complete our misfortunes, my mother gave birth to a second son." Under these untoward circumstances our hero's father, "who did not like the contemplation of painful thoughts," determined on leaving his wife and children to get on as well as they could at Venice, and taking a journey to Rome "to distract his thoughts."

At this time, it would seem that he—Giulio Goldoni, the author's father—had never thought of doing anything for his livelihood. But at Rome, a friend and compatriot introduced him to Lancisi, first physician and chamberlain to Clement XI. This gentleman took a fancy to him, and advised him to turn his attention to medicine. "My father consented, pursued his studies in the College of the Sapienza, practised at the hospital of Santo Spirito, and received his degree of doctor at the end of four years, upon which his Mæcenas sent him to begin the exercise of his profession at Perugia."

And he did exercise his profession at Perugia, making friends with several of the leading nobles

of the place, seeing that "he was," as his son tells us, "perhaps a good physician, but certainly a very pleasant companion." Settled thus at Perugia, and at once taking, as it would seem, the first practice there, by virtue of his Roman diploma and his four years of preparation, Giulio Goldoni wrote to Venice to call, not his wife, but his son, now some ten years old, to join him at the city of his adoption. The poor wife resists, weeps, yields; and an abbate, a friend of the family, is found, who is going to Rome, and who promises to drop little Carlo at Perugia by the way. They embark for Rimini, and, landing there, have to perform the rest of the journey on horseback, to the infinite terror and distress of the young Goldoni, who "had seen horses in his infancy," and who was dreadfully afraid of them, deeming them a ferocious kind of wild beasts. "They took me by the girdle, and tossed me into the saddle! Merciful Heaven! Boots! bridle! spurs! whip! What was I to do with all that? I was tossed about like a sack! The reverend father laughed till the tears ran down his cheeks. The servants mocked me, and I could not help laughing at it all myself!"

He joins his father at Perugia, and is sent by

him to the Jesuits' College to complete his education, while his father continues to practise in the city. There Goldoni completed the three years' course of "grammar," "humanities," and "rhetoric," which constituted the recognised curriculum; and then his father's principal "protector," the Marchese Antinori, having died about the same time, and various mortifications having thereupon arisen, in consequence of the medical men of Perugia looking upon the "foreign" physician with no favourable eyes, it was determined that the Signora Goldoni and her second son should be summoned from Venice, and that the whole family should proceed together to Rimini. Giulio Goldoni destined his son to the profession of medicine, and it became, therefore, necessary that he should now study "philosophy." And as the Dominicans had a school at Rimini famous for logic, "which opens the road to all the sciences, physical as well as speculative," it was decided that Carlo should be left a boarder in the house of a Venetian banker, a friend of his father's, for the purpose of studying logic under the reverend fathers, while the rest of the family went to establish themselves at Chiozzo, where Giulio Goldoni, apparently without any diffi-

culty, began to practise, and found himself at once surrounded by a numerous circle of patients.

This rapid and easy breaking off and recommencement of a career, the nature of which, according to our notions, requires, more than almost any other, time, and that connection which is only attained by time, occurs two or three times in the history of Giulio Goldoni's career, as related by his son. How came it that a stranger—a "foreigner," as he would then be considered—and one whose medical abilities, if we may judge by the nature of his preparatory studies, could not have been such as to conciliate any great degree of legitimate confidence, was able to pitch his tent thus suddenly in a city quite new to him, and forthwith find a satisfactory "clientèle?" May not some explanation of what seems to us so strange be found in the spectacle still to be witnessed in Italian cities, of the "ciarlatano"—the travelling quack, who arrives with sound of trumpet, stations his carriage or caravan, turned into a stage, on the principal piazza of the city, and announcing the wonders of his art with stentorian lungs, and no despicable amount of genuine eloquence, does a stroke of business among the crowd which

he never fails to attract which the regular practitioners of the place could not equal? May not the required explanation be also assisted by the common and curious use of the word "peregrino?" "Peregrino," it is hardly necessary to say, means "foreign"—"coming from a distance"—the original of our word "pilgrim." But it is to this day constantly used, in Italy, to mean "excellent"—"exquisite." The goods, of whatever sort they may be, that come from afar are presumed to be better than the home product; and the same rule, in the dense darkness of the general ignorance, was deemed applicable to the practitioners of the healing art.

Young Carlo is consigned, meanwhile, to the care of the reverend Dominican Father Cardini—"a kind, wise, and learned man—of much merit, indeed, but a thorough-going Tomist, incapable of leaving his old ruts." "This celebrated man bored me to death. His digressions, his scholastic subtleties, and his 'barbaras' and 'baraliptons,' seemed to me useless and ridiculous." "There were many," he adds naïvely, "who thought as I did; but modern philosophy had not at that day made the notable progress that it has since accomplished."

Being thus bored by his Dominican instructors, he sought to compensate himself by frequenting the theatre, just then opened by a recently arrived company of players, and at his first visit discovered that they were Venetians—compatriots in a foreign land! In a very short time he had become intimate with the whole troupe, and was at home behind the scenes. One Friday—a holiday for the players throughout all Italy, except Venice—the whole troupe go on a pic-nicing excursion into the country, and Goldoni goes with them. Upon that occasion he learns that the company is to leave Rimini that day week—that a boat has already been engaged to convey them to Chiozzo. “Chiozzo!” exclaims Goldoni; “my mother is there, and I should so much like to go and see her!” “Come with us!” one and all the troupe cried in chorus; “yes, yes, come with us! Come with us! In our boat you’ll do capitally! You will have nothing to pay. We shall eat and drink, and laugh and sing, and play cards and amuse ourselves!”

“How was it possible to resist such a programme, and miss such an opportunity!” says Goldoni, writing at eighty.

He went to his lodgings to consult the friends



in whose care he had been left. They would not hear of such an escapade. The young scapegrace pretends to submit to what is said to him ; but on the day named for the departure, gets up very early, steals down to the port, and hides himself on board the actors' boat.

Presently the troupe come down to embark. And where is Signor Goldoni ? At the last moment our hero creeps out from his hiding-place ! Ecco Signor Goldoni ! Universal hurrah and laughter ! amid which the anchor is heaved and sail hoisted. “Twelve actors and actresses, a prompter, a machinist, a property-man, eight servants, four dressers, two nurses, children of every age, dogs, cats, monkeys, parrots, singing birds, pigeons, and a pet lamb ! A veritable Noah's ark !” says our author, who thus goes on to describe his voyage—

“The boat being very large, there were many compartments, and every woman had her own little crib shut off by curtains. A good bed had been prepared for me alongside the ‘impresario,’ and every one was well placed. The general manager of the voyage, who was at the same time cook and keeper of the wine department, rang a bell, which was the signal for breakfast. We all assembled in a sort of saloon

contrived in the middle of the boat upon a floor of boxes, bales, and baggage, and there, on an oval table, we found coffee, tea, milk, roast meat, wine, and water. The 'prima donna' wanted broth; but there was none for her! Thereupon she goes into a fury, and we had much ado to pacify her with a cup of chocolate. She was the least good-looking woman on board, and the most difficult to content! After breakfast cards were proposed, to pass the time till dinner. And a game of 'three sevens,' and another of picquet, were about to begin, when a faro table, established on the roof of the boat, attracted everybody. The bank showed that pastime, rather than any real gambling, was intended; nor, indeed, would our 'impresario' have permitted it, had it been otherwise. We played, we laughed, we jested, and joked each other. But, hark! there's the bell for dinner, and all rush down!

"Maccaroni! All fling themselves upon it, and devour three tureens full; bœuf à-la-mode, cold fowl, loin of veal, dessert, excellent wine! Ah! what a good dinner! Ah! what appetite!

"We remained three hours at table. There was playing on several different instruments,

and much singing. The 'first chambermaid' sang admirably well. I looked at her attentively, and she produced a singular impression on me. But all on a sudden an accident happened that disturbed all the enjoyment of the party. A cat, the pet of the 'prima donna,' escaped from its basket! She called all hands to her assistance; and we all ran after the fugitive. But the cat, which was as untamed as its mistress, bolted, and sprang, and leaped, and finally ran up the mast. A sailor goes up to capture the beast, and the cat springs into the sea and there remains. Thereupon our 'prima donna' is in despair. She wants to make a general slaughter of all the other animals on board. She threatens to throw her maid into the tomb of her beloved pet. Everybody takes the maid's part, and the hubbub is general. The 'impresario' comes upon the scene and laughs heartily, jokes and caresses the afflicted lady, who finally begins to laugh herself—and puss is forgotten!

"But enough of this nonsense," exclaims Goldoni, writing at fourscore. Nevertheless, he remembers that "our voyage lasted four days, and it was all the time the same amusements, the same pleasures, the same appetite."

Signora Goldoni was delighted to see her

son, and perfectly ready to thank the "impresario" for having brought him to her. And Carlo had not much more difficulty in persuading his father to forgive his irregular manner of quitting the Dominican Tomists. It was perhaps the more easy from the circumstance that the father had obtained from the Marchese Goldoni, of Milan, a connection of the family, a promise for Carlo of a "borsa"—a scholarship, as we should say, at the "Collegio Ghislieri," founded by the Pope of that name in the University of Pavia.

Carlo and his father go at the proper time to Pavia, and there find, for the first time, that sundry conditions must be fulfilled by the candidate for a scholarship in the Collegio Ghislieri. Many documents, attestations, and certificates are needed, none of all which have been so much as thought of by the careless Venetian. Among other things it is necessary that a candidate shall be of the full age of eighteen years, whereas our Carlo is only sixteen. However, all these difficulties are got over by a little ingenuity and good interest—even the last, which seemed the most formidable. "What saint it was that did the miracle, I do not know," says he; but this I know well,

that one night I went to bed sixteen years old only, and got up the next morning eighteen ! ”

Here are a few words which give a lively picture of the university life at Pavia.

“ In this college the board was good and the lodgings superlatively good. We had liberty to go out for the purpose of going to the university ; and we went about in every part of the town. The rule required us to go out two-and-two, and to return to the college in the same fashion. We, however, were wont to part company at the first street corner, and to settle with our comrades a place of meeting, for the purpose of returning to college according to rule. But even if we came in alone the porter took no notice of it, and did not report us. This place of porter was worth to him as much as that of a minister of state’s usher. We were well dressed, with all the elegance of the young Abbati who frequent ‘ conversazioni ’—English cloth, French silk, embroidery, and galon. Our outer garment was a species of gown without sleeves, with a pendant of velvet hanging from the left shoulder, with the Ghislieri arms embroidered on it in gold and silver, surmounted by the apostolic tiara, and the keys of St. Peter. This gown, called a ‘ *sovrana*,’ is the uniform of

the college, and gives the scholars an air of importance. We were by no means a company of schoolboys. We did precisely what we pleased. There was much dissipation in the college, and much liberty beyond the walls. There I learned fencing, dancing, music, drawing, and every imaginable game of hazard. These last were forbidden, but we played all the same, and the game of 'formiera' cost me dear. When we went out we steered clear of the university, and used to haunt the pleasantest houses in the town. In Pavia the scholars are regarded much as the officers are in a garrison town. The men detest them—the women receive them!"

When the beginning of the vacation had come, two Venetians, with whom he had become acquainted by chance—the secretary and the "maestro di casa" of the Venetian minister resident at Milan—having occasion to go to Venice, asked Goldoni to accompany them. The journey was to be made by boat on the Ticino and the Po.

"It is impossible to imagine anything more convenient and elegant than the boat which had been sent from Venice for this purpose. It consisted of a saloon and another contiguous



chamber, covered by a balustraded deck on the top of them, and adorned with mirrors, pictures, carvings, and sofas, in the most commodious fashion. It was very different from the actors' boat at Rimini. We were ten masters on board, and many servants ; and there were beds under the prow and under the stern. But our plan was to voyage only by day, and take up our quarters in good inns at night ; and where there were none, to ask hospitality of the Benedictines, who possess immense estates on the banks of the Po. All the members of our party played on some instrument. There were three violins, a violoncello, two hautboys, a horn, and a guitar. I only was good for nothing, and was ashamed to be so. To make up, however, for my uselessness in any other way, I occupied myself every morning in putting in verse—good or bad—the events of the previous day. This notion diverted my companions immensely, and was our amusement after our coffee. Our favourite occupation was music. In the evening we all sat upon the deck, and thence filled the air with harmony. We reached Cremona about six in the evening. Our approach had already been rumoured in the city, and the banks of the river were crowded with people on the look-out for

us, who received us with all the honours. They took us at once to a magnificent villa at the outskirts of the city, where we gave a concert, with the aid of many musicians of the place. Then we had a grand supper, and danced all night, not returning to our boat till the first rays of the rising sun surprised us. It was a repetition of the same thing at other places—at Le Bottrighe in the house of the Marchese Tassoni. And thus, amid laughter, play, and amusement, we arrived at Chiozzo, where I had to separate from the pleasantest party in the world.”

Impossible to have a picture of Italian life in the eighteenth century more graphic or more full of local colouring! But the stranger would be signally disappointed who should embark on the Po with the expectation of meeting any such festive travellers in these latter days. The people have undergone no change in character,—as yet—which would make them less enjoy such a voyage, or prevent them from entering into the spirit of the party with equally ready good humour. But the Juggernaut car of nineteenth-century progress drives them. People go from Pavia to Venice in as few hours as our holiday-making travellers took days. The railroad has abolished all such pleasant loitering..

Life is less easy. Even in Italy men cannot spare idle days uncounting them. Besides, doubt as to political partisanship would interfere with such easy-going chance familiarity.

Here, as elsewhere, on the banks of the Po as on other banks, national progress does certainly seem to show itself, so far as it has yet advanced, to be sadly incompatible with cakes and ale. Any Italian man may now think to any extent that his intellect will permit him on any of the greatest subjects that can exercise the human intelligence, and may speak aloud the result of his thinking. No one of that pleasant eighteenth-century party on the Po could have dared to breathe the faintest doubt as to the absolute truth of all the officially-received doctrines and dogmas of Church and State. But then no one of them had the smallest desire to occupy his mind with any such subjects, or the smallest suspicion that his life was the less worth having because he might not do so.

But the general easy-going festal life, of which the above little picture is so lively a specimen, is also rendered less possible by the mere increase of numbers, and especially by the increase of that portion of the nation which expects to share in the life-banquet of society's

high table. There were cakes and ale, after a sort, below the salt in those days ; but the number has been greatly increased, and is rapidly increasing, of those who are no longer contented to sit below the salt. And this all those who are believers in the virtue of progress at all, must, if they are true to their flag, admit to be good.

There is, however, one truth—an indubitable one, we take it to be, to all those who know Italy well—which it is worth while to mention, obiter, for the consideration of English sociologists. In lagging, backward, idle Italy, those who have been condemned to sit below the salt at life's banquet have not been so thrust out from the table altogether as they have been in progressive England. There exist no such masses of misery and destitution in Italy as may be found both in our cities and in our agricultural districts. Nay, despite the general low level of education, and the beggarly account given by statistics in the matters of reading and writing, there are not to be found in Italy such masses of utterly degraded and uncultivated ruffianism as may be pointed to in favoured England. We should like to lay before the English reader a little in detail

such an account of some of the features of Italian agricultural life as would show that, however little the systems in vogue may be calculated to promote agricultural progress, or to obtain for the owner of the land as large a portion of the produce of it as the English landlord obtains, these systems do favour the well-being of the cultivator and the peasant class. But any attempt to do this here would lead us too far away from the proper subject of this paper.

When Goldoni returned to Pavia to complete his course of three years, the ill-will of the citizens towards the students had come to a crisis. A large number of men belonging to the leading families in the city had signed a paper, by which they bound themselves to offer marriage to no girl belonging to a house in which the students were received. The result was that Pavia became a very much less agreeable residence for the collegians than they had previously found it. And great was the resentment produced. In this state of things Goldoni was induced by some of his fellow-students to compose a satire on the leaders among their enemies. They got the manuscript from him, and traitorously caused copies to be made of it,

which they circulated through the city under circumstances which rendered it easy to recognize him as the author. The fury which was occasioned seems to have been far beyond anything which English people could anticipate or understand as produced by such a cause. Several families banded themselves together in a vow to take the life of this schoolboy, guilty of having written a few libellous verses. If it had not been that he had already been placed under arrest within the College walls, he would in all probability have been murdered. The whole city was in turmoil. The prefect, who was absent at the moment, was sent for in haste. The governor was summoned from Milan. Had it not been that the Collegio Ghislieri was a privileged place, the unlucky satirist would have been sent to prison as a criminal. As it was, he was expelled from College, despite the intercession of the Bishop, who would fain have saved him.

He was sent home on board a salt barge, which was bound down the Po to Venice, and found the journey a very different one from that above described. The bursar of the college, who had conducted him on board, and consigned him to the care of the captain, put thirty pauls,



—equal to about fifteen francs—into his hand, for his expenses, and left him. He found himself so miserable, what with the dread of meeting his father and the discomfort of the mode of conveyance, that when the boat stopped at Piacenza he had resolved to run away. But the captain, who had had his orders with reference to such a possibility, would not allow him to leave the boat. While he was lying on his bed that evening in great misery and dejection, another passenger came on board—a Jesuit priest. This worthy man went to work to comfort him—drew all his lamentable story from him—spoke to him with such unction and eloquence as to persuade him that the only means of recovering his peace of mind was to confess himself fully and receive absolution—which the poor boy did, and suffered his spiritual consoler to extract from him his thirty pauls as penance! The next day he wanted again—in the absolute absence of any possible occupation or amusement—to apply to the reverend father for ghostly instruction and comfort; but the worthy Jesuit had no longer any leisure or attention to bestow upon him.

Thus thrown back upon his parents' hands, and without occupation, he soon succeeded in

getting employed as an assistant in the office of one of the Venetian governors sent out to govern the various cities of the Venetian territory. In this capacity he was sent into Friuli, where he seems to have discharged the duties of his office satisfactorily. All work in those days, however, seems to have been compatible with a very large allowance of play. Here is his account of the way in which a bit of official duty was performed:—"A 'processo verbale' had to be made ten leagues away from the city about an affray that had taken place. As the country in the direction in question was a plain, the road through which is lined all along with the most charming country houses, I engaged several of my friends to accompany me. We were a party of twelve—six women and six men—and four servants. Every one was on horseback, and we spent twelve days in this agreeable expedition. In all that time we never dined or supped twice in the same place, nor did we pass one of the twelve nights in bed. Very often we walked on foot among the clustering vines and shady fig-trees, breakfasting on milk, or on the daily food of the peasants; that is to say, cakes made from maize, together with some savoury roast. Wherever we came we

were received with festivity, and banquets, and merriment. Wherever we arrived at night there was a ball, which lasted all night, and the ladies of our party did their parts as well as the men. Among the party were two sisters, one married and one single. The latter pleased me much; and, in fact, it was for her sake that I had arranged this party. She was as prudent and modest as her sister was wild. The nature of our excursion gave us many opportunities of revealing our sentiments to each other, so that we became lovers. My 'processo' was knocked off in a couple of hours. And then we returned by a different road, in order to vary our amusement. But on arriving at Feltre"—the city in which he was employed—"we were all knocked up and utterly worn out, so that I felt it for a month afterwards, and my poor Angelica had a forty days' fever."

The end of the story of the loves of Carlo and Angelica must be given in the author's own words. Surely it is one of the most extraordinary confessions that any man ever made. No man of Anglo-Saxon race, we imagine, could read it without feeling the intimate conviction that no fellow-creature of his own stock could ever have so felt, reasoned, and confessed.

One of the profoundest differences between the Teuton and the Latin races is to be found in the different nature of their relations to and manner of regarding the other sex. And here is a specimen of that difference very curious in its significance—

“The poor girl—Angelica—loved me tenderly,” he goes on to say, “and with perfect confidence. I also loved her with my whole soul, and may say that she was the first whom I had ever truly loved. She aspired to become my wife; and would really have become such, if certain special well-founded reflections had not dissuaded me from marrying her. Her elder sister had been a woman of rare beauty, and lost it after her first confinements. The younger sister had the same complexion, the same lineaments; and was one of those delicate beauties that fade from the mere effect of the air, and which suffer from the least irregularity. I had a clear proof of it. The fatigue of the journey we had made together had immensely changed her. I was young; and if my wife had after some time lost the freshness of her beauty, I foresaw how great would be my despair.” And this from a man in love, as he, poor creature, in the depth of his absolute incapacity

to conceive the meaning of the word, describes himself! But it is unfair to say that he so describes himself. He tells us that he was "amante." And let all the dictionaries say what they will, "amore" does not mean the same thing as "love."

After a while Goldoni's mother became discontented with the itinerant sort of life to which the nature of the employment her son had adopted constrained him; and when he lost his father, which occurred when Carlo was twenty-four years of age, she persuaded her son to settle himself as an advocate in Venice. But for this purpose it was necessary that he should take the degree of Doctor of Law in the University of Padua. A course of five years' study in the University was needed for the due taking of this degree. But difficulties of this sort could not bar the progress of him who had gone to bed sixteen, and waked the next morning with the eighteen years needed for his holding a scholarship in Pope Ghislieri's College. There was an old law or custom to the effect that "foreigners," if otherwise competent, might be admitted to the degree of Doctor of Law without residence. Carlo Goldoni was born at Venice, as his father had been before him. But his grandfather had

come from Modena. And by virtue of this fact a letter was obtained from the secretary of the Duke of Modena, recognizing Carlo Goldoni as a subject of the Duke, and a "foreigner" at Venice and therefore entitled to his degree without residence. So he went up to Padua with his tutor, a Venetian lawyer with whom he had been reading for a few months, and they both passed the whole night at cards, and lost all their money. Nevertheless, the young candidate went up the next day and had to improvise a dissertation on the law respecting the property of persons dying intestate, and another on the law of bigamy, before the assembled University. He was not a little alarmed at the ordeal before him. But his proposer—a Doctor of the University who is selected by the friends of the candidate to act as a sort of godfather—whispered to him at the last moment there was nothing to fear; that all this was mere form; and that one must be monstrously ignorant indeed to be refused the laurel in the University of Padua. Accordingly he put into academic form, as well as he could, all that he had ever heard about bigamy and intestate persons, and was adjudged the laurel, "*nemine penitus penitusque discrepante.*" A characteristic incident



had predisposed the learned assembly in his favour. He made a blunder in citing some author. His proposer prompted him. Now, there was, it seems, a certain severe and morose old disciplinarian there among the doctors who, overhearing this prompt, got up and said that all prompting was forbidden, that he protested against it, and begged that it might not occur again. And this outbreak, Goldoni tells us, was thought to be so unduly severe, in such bad taste, and such an innovation, that it disposed them all in his favour. Returning in triumph to Venice, he was at once accepted as a member of the Venetian bar, and almost immediately had a fair share of practice. He soon, however, renewed his acquaintance with the players, and is found writing for them in various ways, working very hard to prevent such employment from encroaching on the hours due to his "studio."

Already he had conceived that reform of the theatre which is the really great work for which Italy has to feel gratitude to his memory. Comedy in Italy, at the time when Goldoni began to write, was exclusively the "comedia a braccia," as it was called. That is to say, a certain well-known set of masked figures—pantaloon, harlequin, columbine, and the rest

of them—presented some fable, having more or less right to the title of comedy, each actor always sustaining parts of the same character, while the author merely furnished the skeleton of the fable, the dialogue of which the actors were to supply, as their own talent might give them utterance at the moment. It will be observed at once how clearly this state of dramatic art was a stage of progress from the representations of a street Punch, whose Italian nationality and ancestry we all know, to those of modern comedy. To cause the “*commedia di arte*”—that is, a drama in which the whole dialogue is furnished by the author, and in which the performers do not wear masks—to supersede the “*comedia a braccia*” was the great work of Goldoni’s life, in which he was completely successful. It was in no small degree up-hill work at first; for actors capable of sustaining unmasked the characters imagined for them, and assigned to them by an author, were rare; and the public was by no means altogether favourable to the change. Before half Goldoni’s course was run, however, the change had been completely made. It needed a writer of his wonderful fertility to accomplish such a change in such a time. And at the same time that

extraordinary amount of production arose from, and was only rendered possible by, the circumstance that Goldoni's theatre was the first step of progress in advance of the old harlequinades. Upon one occasion he undertook to supply a theatre with sixteen new pieces in the course of a year, and kept his engagement. It cannot be denied that, marvellous as such industry must appear in any case, a perusal of the pieces in question is calculated to lessen one's surprise at it.

We have not, however, yet reached the time when he finally accepted the profession of a dramatic writer as his sole and acknowledged business in life.

His twofold career at Venice, as a barrister and as a playwright, was brought to a sudden termination by a matrimonial "difficulty" in which he involved himself. He made acquaintance with a family of ladies in which there were a maiden aunt and a niece. He seems to have made love to both, and to have changed his mind as to which of them he really wished to marry, making one lady furious by the change, and then uniting their forces against him by finally making up his mind that he would not have anything to say to either of

them. There were two ways in which such conduct might be avenged—the knife and the law! And to escape from the twofold danger, our hero determined on flight;—shut up his “studio,” abandoned his career, and went off with the world before him, as light in heart and baggage as Sterne with his black satin breeches. He found his way to Milan; read to a company of opera singers there a piece which he had composed for an opera; and was made to understand, by their criticisms and objections, that his work was good for nothing—a curious and most characteristic scene, which, unhappily, the tyrant necessities of space and time will not permit us to give the reader. Then, having absolutely no resource before him, he called upon the Venetian envoy resident at Milan, had a conversation with the great man while the latter was dressing himself, and at the end of it accepted a position in the minister’s household as “gentiluomo di camera!”—so brought his light portmanteau, and was installed at once in his new quarters.

The strange ease with which such positions are found, and such arrangements made, seems to a reader of these and other memoirs of the time to be one of the most curious characteris-

tics of the time and clime. Gentiluomo di camera! What did it mean? Genteel hanger-on! There were so many styles and titles invented for the enabling of poor men, who had received liberal educations, as education then went, to live in dependence on rich men! All the framework of society seems to have been shaped with a view to the providing of bread for a large class who would not dig, and were ashamed to beg save in certain recognized guises.

In the case of Goldoni, however, it shortly came to pass that his position was by no means either a sinecure or a subordinate one. The minister and his secretary did not get on well together. And very soon Goldoni found himself discharging all the functions of Secretary of Legation. And all went on pleasantly enough, till everything was put an end to by the breaking out of war in 1733. The rights of Don Carlos were to be sustained by the arms of Spain, France, and Sardinia against the House of Austria, and the whole of the north of Italy became the theatre of war.

Goldoni and his master were driven from Milan and betook themselves to Crema. In that city there was another diplomatic agent of Venice, and much rivalry arose between the

two as to the amount and importance of the intelligence they were able to send to the Republic from the seat of war. Upon one occasion Goldoni was intrusted with some important papers to copy, with directions to return them to the minister the next morning. Our hero worked hard, finished his task, locked all up in his desk, and went out to play at cards all night in a house of no very good repute. He had imagined that the minister would not be ready to see him till nine or ten o'clock. But at five the great man sent for him, could not find him, became furiously angry, and took it into his head that Goldoni had been to sell the important intelligence to the rival envoy. Furious accusations! Indignant protestations! A complete rupture! Presently, however, the minister discovered by chance how and where Goldoni had passed the night, and would fain have made up the quarrel. But our hero had been too deeply offended, and left his patron, to wander forth into the world once more with no sort of settled plan before him.

And, moreover, the world into which he thus wandered forth was all convulsed by war. Before long, however, he was again writing comedies successfully at Venice. His engage-



ments with the comedians took him to Genoa, where, at a very short notice, he married the daughter of a notary, whose face, seen at an opposite window, had pleased him. And a very good wife—a much better than he seems to have deserved—she appears to have been to him.

Then his Genoese connection led to his being made Consul for the Republic of Genoa at Venice. On receiving this appointment he took a handsome apartment and began house-keeping on a corresponding scale, in a style calculated to do honour to the State he represented; and was, at the same time, zealously active on sundry occasions which presented themselves to protect the interests and maintain the rights of the Ligurian Republic; all which was rewarded by the distinguished approbation of the Genoese Senate, which continued to be manifested in a manner most agreeable to all parties, till, towards the end of the year, on some little reference to that part of the matter on the part of the zealous Consul, it appeared that the “superb” Republic had not the slightest idea of attaching any salary to the office which had been so graciously bestowed upon him.

Here was a mighty fall! Nothing for it but once again to shut up house, cut moorings, and

go again adrift—this time with a wife—into a world still tossing and tumbling in the throes of war.

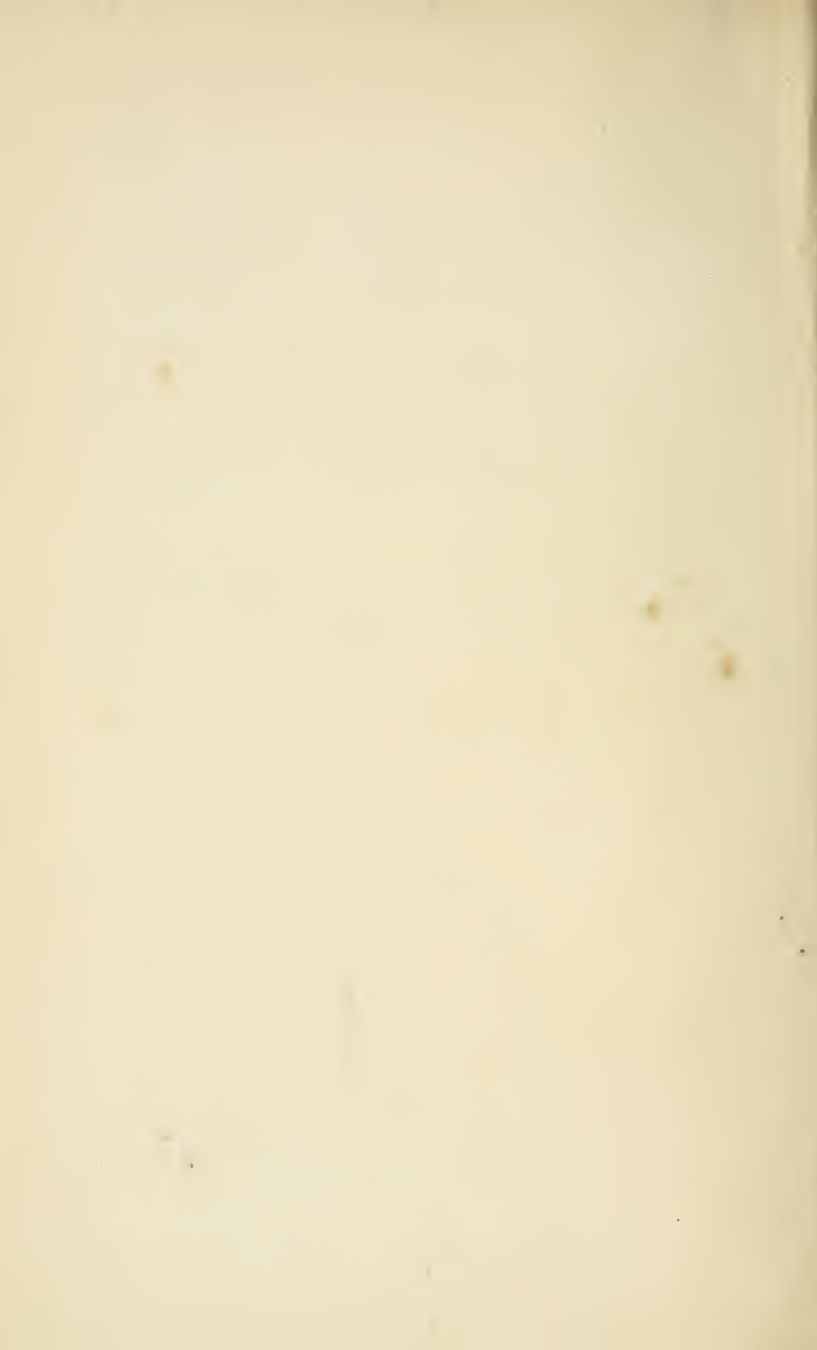
It is a pity that we have no space left on the present occasion to give some picture of his war-tossed adventures. War was a very different sort of thing at that period from what it has become in our hurrying, business-like days. It was half-play in those times of cakes and ale to the actors—though in no wise play at all, indeed, to the tillers of the earth, and drawers of water, and hewers of wood! But then they did not want any more than the beasts of the field! Above all, there was no hurry about the matter. Campaign and winter quarters seemed as much a part of Nature's ordinances as harvest time and seed time.

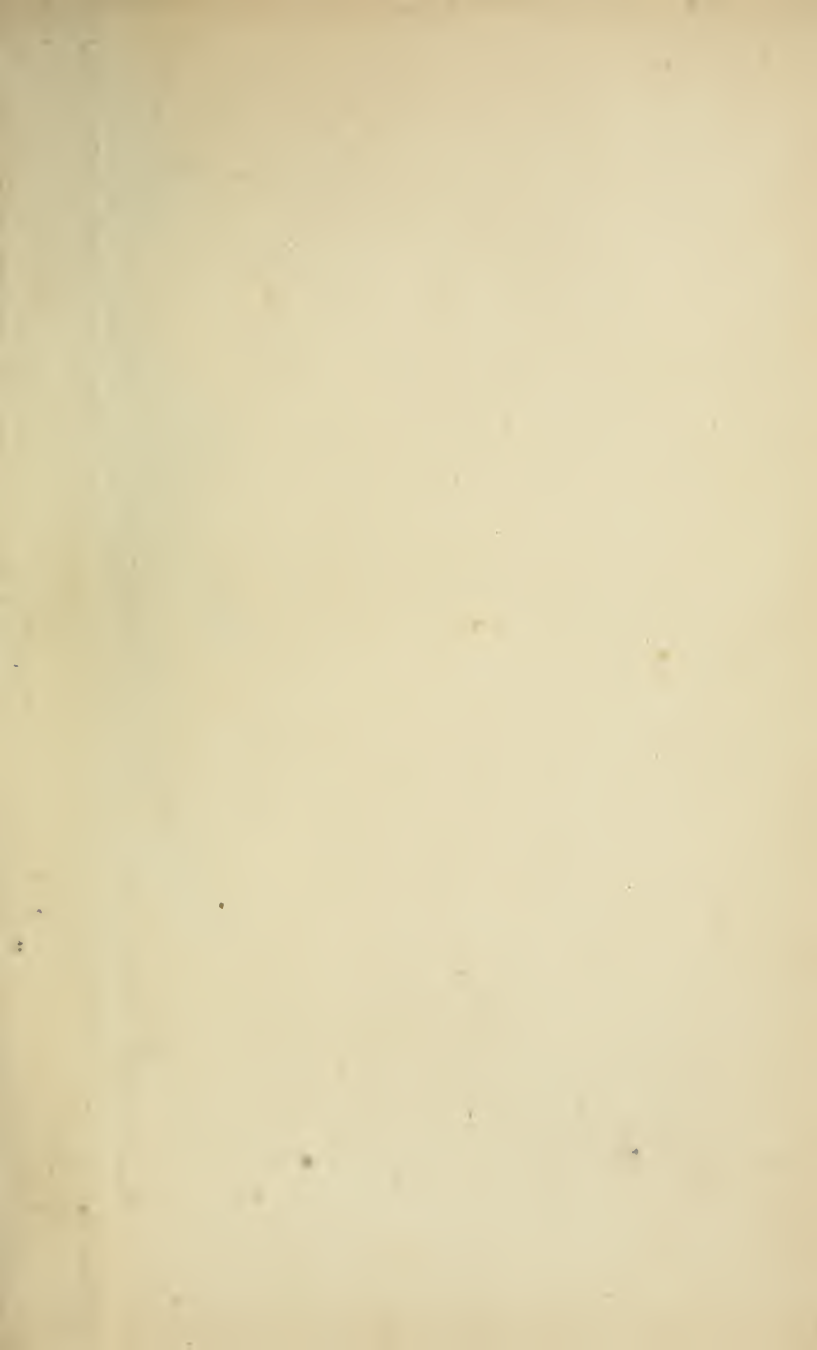
In the course of his war wanderings, however, Goldoni was wafted to Tuscany, and after a little while settled at Pisa; and, as has been said, opened a "studio," and started there as an advocate;—once again, strange as it seems, successfully. Successfully, till the players once more—coming over by chance from Leghorn—found him out, tempted him, and finally brought him back in triumph to Venice, thenceforward an avowed retainer of Thespis.

From this time forth the memoirs contain little more than the record of the successes and failures of the succession of dramas he poured forth with such wonderful rapidity; and contribute much less than during his more unsettled life to any picture of the life of the times. For the story of the Italian stage and its progress they continue to be interesting; yet even in this respect the most interesting portion of the story is the earlier part; for in that is to be mainly found the record of the advance from the old masked and improvised drama to modern comedy.

THE END.









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